

Evolvix



THE
TEMPLE
CLASSICS

THE LEGEND
OF
ST. FRANCIS
BY THE
THREE COMPANIONS

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The Legend of S. Francis

I. THESE be certain things written by Concerning S.
Three Companions of the Blessed Francis Francis.
concerning his life and his conversation
in the worldly state, and of his marvellous
and perfect conversion. And concerning
the perfection of the first beginning
and founding of the Order, in himself and
in the first brethren.

LETTER OF THE THREE COMPANIONS.

To the reverend Father in Christ,
Brother Crescentius, by the grace of God
Minister-General, Brother Leo, Brother
Rufino, and Brother Angelo, formerly
companions, albeit unworthy, of the most
blessed Father Francis, due reverence and
devotion in the Lord.

Since the brethren are bound by com-
mand of the Chapter-General last past and
your own to bring before your Father-
hood such tokens and miracles of the most
blessed Father Francis as can be known or
discovered,—it seemed good unto us who,

THE LEGEND OF

The first albeit unworthy, held converse with him Brethren, for some long time, to communicate, truth guiding us, unto Your Holiness a few of the many things that he wrought, that we saw with our own eyes, or were able to learn through other holy brethren, and chiefly through Brother Philip, the Visitor of the Poor Ladies, Brother Illuminato de Arce, Brother Masseo of Marignano, Brother John, the companion of the venerable Father Brother Giles, (who heard most of these things from the same holy Brother Giles), and from Brother Bernard of sacred memory, the first companion of the Blessed Francis; not content only to relate miracles, which do not constitute holiness, but do only make it manifest, but we desire further to show forth the tokens of his holy conversation, and the object of his holy purpose to the praise and glory of God Most High, and our most holy Father aforesaid, and to the edification of those that desire to follow his footsteps. Which things we nevertheless write not after the manner of a Legend, seeing that for a long time have Legends been put together of his life, and of the miracles that God wrought through him. But as it were from a pleasant meadow

we pluck certain flowers that in our The judgment are fairer than the rest, not manner of following a continuous history, but leav- their history. ing out much that would follow in due sequence, which hath been set in place in the Legends aforesaid in discourse both truthful and easy to understand. Among the which you may make these few things that we have written to be inserted, if your discretion shall see fit. For we believe that, had these things been known unto those venerable men that put together the said Legends, they woulde by no means have passed them by, but would rather have eloquently related them for their own sake.

May Your Fatherhood ever be strong and whole in Our Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom we humbly and faithfully commend unto Your Holiness ourselves your faithful sons. Given in the place Greccio, the eleventh day of August, in the year of Our Lord 1246.

CHAPTER I

Of his birth, and vanities, and waywardness, and his prodigal ways, and how from these he came unto largesse, and charity toward the poor.

S. 2. Francis, born in the city of Assisi
Francis which lieth in the confines of the Vale
as a of Spoleto, was at first named John by
youth. his mother. Then whenas his father, in
whose absence he had been born, returned
from France, he was afterward named
Francis. After he was grown up, and
had become of a subtle wit, he did
practise the art of his father, that is, trade.
But in far other wise, for he was
merrier man than was his father, and
more generous, given unto jests and
songs, going round the city of Assisi day
and night in company with his like,
most free-handed in spending ; insomuch
as that he spent all his havings and his
profits in banquets and other matters.
Wherefore oftentimes was he rebuked of
his parents, who told him he ran into so
great expenses on himself and on others

that he seemed to be no son of theirs, His
but rather of some mighty prince. Nevertheless, for that his parents were rich, and loved him most tenderly, they bore with him in such matters, not being minded to thwart him. Nay, his mother, when a talk arose among the neighbours as touching his prodigal ways, made answer: "What think ye of my son? He shall yet be the son of God by grace." But he himself was not only free-handed, or rather prodigal, in these alone, but even in his clothes he was beyond measure sumptuous, using stuffs more costly than it beseemed him to wear. So wayward was his fancy that at times on the same coat he would cause a right costly cloth to be matched with one of the meanest.

3. Yet he was as though by nature courteous, in manner and word after the purpose of his heart, never speaking a harmful or shameful word unto any. Nay, indeed, though he were so gay and wanton a youth, yet of set purpose would he make no reply unto them that said shameful things unto him. And hence was his fame so spread abroad throughout the whole neighbourhood that it was said by many who knew him that he

He re- would do something great. By the proacheth which steps of godliness he did progress himself unto such grace that he would say in converse with himself: "Seeing that thou art bountiful and courteous toward men, from whom thou receivest naught save a passing and empty favour, it is just that thou shouldst be courteous and bountiful toward God, Who is Himself most bountiful in rewarding His poor." Wherefore thenceforward did he look with goodwill upon the poor, bestowing alms upon them abundantly. And albeit he were merchant, yet was he a most prodigal dispenser of this world's riches. One day, when he was standing in the warehouse wherein he sold goods, and was intent on business of the kind, ■ certain poor man came unto him asking an alms for the love of God ; howbeit, he was held back by the covetousness of wealth, and the cares of merchandise, and denied him the alms. But forthwith, being looked upon by the divine grace, he did rebuke himself of great churlishness, saying : " Had this poor man asked thee aught in the name of a great Count or Baron, assuredly thou wouldest have given him what he had asked. How much more then oughtest thou to have

done it for the King of Kings and Lord for alms
of all?" By reason whereof he thence-
forth set it before himself in his heart
never again to deny aught asked in the
name of so great a Lord.

CHAPTER II

*How he was made prisoner at Perugia, and
of two visions that he had when desir-
ing to become a knight.*

Captive in Perugia. 4. On a time when war was being waged between Perugia and Assisi, Francis was taken prisoner with many of his fellow-citizens and held in captivity with them at Perugia. Yet for that he was a noble in his manners, he was imprisoned along with the knights. Now on a day his fellow-prisoners were sad, but he, being by nature joyous and merry, appeared not to be sad, but even in some sort to jest. Wherefore one of his companions rebuked him, saying it was like a madman to rejoice seeing that he were set in prison. Unto whom Francis made answer with a loud voice: "What think ye of me? I shall be worshipped by the whole world." And when one of the knights with whom he was conjoined had done an injury unto one of his fellow-prisoners, and on this account all the rest wished to hold aloof from him, Francis

alone did not refuse to company with him, and furthermore exhorted the rest to do the same. Now when the year was ended and peace made once more between the cities aforesaid, Francis with his fellow-prisoners returned unto Assisi.

5. Then a few years later a certain noble of the city of Assisi provided himself with warlike gear to go into Apulia to increase his profit of money or renown. Upon hearing this, Francis did aspire to go with him, and to be made knight by a certain Count, Gentile by name; wherefore he made ready stuffs as costly as he could, poorer in riches than his fellow-citizen, but more profuse in largesse. One night then, when he had given all his thoughts toward bringing this to pass, and was fevered with desire for making the journey, he was visited by the Lord, Who draweth him as one eager for glory to the pinnacle of glory by a vision, and uplifteth him. For while sleeping that night one appeared unto him, calling him by name, and leading him unto the palace of a fair bride, very pleasant, and full of knightly armour, to wit, glittering shields, and other apparel hanging on the wall as it were waiting for knights to accoutre them therewithal.

A pre- And while he, rejoicing greatly, marn-
sage of gaged silently within himself what this
fame. might be, he asked whose were these
arms flashing with such splendour and
this so pleasant palace? And answer was
made him that the palace and all things
therein were his own and his knights'.
And thus awakening, with joyous heart
he rose early, thinking in worldly wise,—
as do they that have not yet fully tasted
of the Spirit of God,—that here he should
lord it right royally, and deeming the
vision a presage of great good fortune, he
bethinketh him of setting forth straight-
way on his journey into Apulia, that he
might be made knight of the Count afore-
said. And so much gayer than his wont
did he seem that many wondered thereat,
and asked whence had he such joy, unto
whom he would reply : “I know that I
shall be a great prince.”

6. A certain foretokening of so great
courtliness and nobility had betided on
the day immediately preceding the vision
aforesaid which is thought to have been
in no small measure the occasion of the
vision itself. For on that day he had
given unto a poor knight all his clothes,
that he had had newly made for himself,
curiously fashioned and costly. When

therefore he had gone unto Spoleto to set A
forth on his journey and go into Apulia,<sup>second
vision.</sup> he began to ponder somewhat. Yet none
the less anxious about his journey, when
he had yielded unto sleep, he heard while
half asleep one asking him whither he
desired to proceed? And when Francis
had revealed his whole purpose, he added :
“ Which can do the better for thee, the
lord, or the servant ? ” And when he
answered “ the lord,” that other said
again unto him : “ Whercfore then dost
thou leave the lord for the servant, and a
rich lord for a poor ? ” And Francis
said : “ Lord, what wouldest Thou have me
to do ? ” “ Return,” saith He, “ unto
thine own country, and it shall be told
unto thee what thou shalt do, for the
vision that thou hast seen behoveth thee
to understand in other wise.” Then,
waking, he began earnestly to ponder
this vision. And just as in the first
vision he had been as it were quite
carried out of himself for his great joy,
coveting worldly good fortune, so in
this vision he withdrew within himself
entirely, wondering at its might, and
meditating so earnestly that he could
sleep no more that night. And so, at
early morn, he returned toward Assisi in

He aught save that sweetness only, which thinketh did so estrange him from carnal sense on the Bride.

that—as he himself afterward said—had he then been pricked as with knives all over at once, he could not have moved from the spot. But when his comrades looked back, and saw him thus far off from them, they returned unto him in fear, staring upon him as one already changed into another man. And they questioned him, saying : “Wheron wast thou thinking, that thou camest not after us? Perchance thou wast thinking of taking a wife?” To whom he replied with a loud voice : “Truly have ye spoken, for that I thought of taking unto me a bride nobler and richer and fairer than ever ye have seen.” And they mocked at him. But this he said not of himself, but inspired of God, for the bride herself was true Religion, whom he took unto him, nobler, richer and fairer than others in her poverty.

8. Thus from that hour began he to wax worthless in his own eyes, and to despise those things he had formerly loved, albeit not utterly so as yet, for not yet was he wholly freed from the vanity of the world. Nevertheless, withdrawing himself little by little from the

tumult of the world, he made it his study His
to treasure up Jesus Christ in his inner prayer
man, and, hiding from the eyes of
mockers the pearl that he would fain
buy at the price of selling his all, he
went oftentimes, and as it were in secret,
daily unto prayer, being urged thereto by
the foretaste of that sweetness that had
visited him more and more often, and did
compel him to come from the streets and
other public places, unto prayer. Albeit
he had long time done good unto the
poor, yet from this time forth he
determined yet more firmly in his heart
never again to deny alms unto any poor
man that did ask it for the love of God,
but to give alms more willingly and
bountifully than had been his wont.
Whenever therefore any poor man asked of
him an alms out of doors, he would supply
him with money, if he could ; had he no
ready money, he would give him his cap
or girdle rather than send the poor man
empty away. And if it were that he
had naught of this kind, he would go
unto some hidden place, and strip off his
shirt, and send the poor man thither that
he might take it unto himself, for the
sake of God. He also would buy vessels
appertaining unto the adornment of

His Churches, and would send them over
mother in all secrecy unto poor priests.
marvel-

leth. 9. And once when, in his father's absence, he was abiding in the house, although only his mother and he were eating in the house, he covered the table with loaves, as though he were preparing for the whole household, and when his mother asked wherefore he placed so much bread on the table, he made answer that he did it as alms to be given unto the poor, for that he was minded to give alms unto every man that did ask it for God's sake. But his mother, loving him beyond her other sons, bore with him in such things, taking note of what he did, and marvelling greatly thereat in her heart. For, just as he had been wont to set his heart on going after his comrades, when he was invited by them, and had so greatly delighted in their fellowship that ofttimes he would rise from table having eaten but little, leaving his parents sore troubled by reason of so untimely a departure,—even so now his heart was set entirely on seeing or hearing poor folk unto whom he might give alms.

10. So changed then was he by Divine grace, albeit still in the secular habit, that he desired to be in some city where

he might, as one unknown, strip off his own clothes, and exchange them for those of some beggar, so that he might wear his instead and make trial of himself by asking alms for the love of God. Now it chanced that at that time he had gone unto Rome on a pilgrimage. And entering into the Church of S. Peter, he meditated on the offerings of certain folk, seeing that they were small, and spake within himself: "Since the Prince of the Apostles should of right be magnificently honoured, why do these folk make such sorry offerings in the Church wherein his body rests?" And so in great fervency he put his hand into his purse and drew it forth full of money, and flung it through the grating of the altar with such a crash that all they who were standing by did marvel greatly at so splendid an oblation. Then going forth in front of the doors of the Church, where many beggars were gathered to ask alms, he secretly makes shift to borrow the rags of one among the neediest and dons them, laying aside his own. Then, standing on the Church steps with the other beggars, he asked an alms in French, for he loved to speak the French tongue, albeit he spake it not

Prayer aright. Thereafter, putting off the said
for rags, and taking again his own clothes,
guidance. he returned unto Assisi, and began to
pray the Lord to direct his way. For he
revealed unto none his secret, nor took
counsel of any in this matter, save only
of God, Who had begun to direct his
way, and at times of the Bishop of Assisi.
For at that time was no true Poverty to
be found among any, and her it was that
he desired above all things of this world,
being minded in her to live, yea, and to
die.

CHAPTER IV

How he began through the lepers to conquer himself, and to feel pleasure in those things that aforetime had been bitter unto him.

11. Now when on a day he was praying fervently unto the Lord, answer was made unto him: "Francis, all those things that thou hast loved after the flesh, and hast desired to have, thou must needs despise and hate, if thou wouldest do My will, and after that thou shalt have begun to do this the things that aforetime seemed sweet unto thee and delightsome shall be unbearable unto thee and bitter, and from those that aforetime thou didst loathe thou shalt drink great sweetness and delight unmeasured." Rejoicing, therefore, at these words, and consoled in the Lord, wheras he had ridden nigh unto Assisi, he met one that was a leper. And for that he had been wont greatly to loathe lepers, he did violence unto himself, and dismounted from his horse, and gave him money,

By the
Lord's
admoni-
tion,

he kissing his hand. And receiving from
succour- him the kiss of peace, he remounted his
eth the lepers. horse, and continued his journey.

Thenceforth began he more and more to despise himself, until by the grace of God he had attained unto perfect mastery over himself.

A few days later, he took much money, and went unto the spital of the lepers, and, gathering all together, did give unto each an alms, kissing his hand. Then as he departed, in very truth that which had aforetime been bitter unto him, to wit, the sight and touch of lepers, was now changed into sweetness. For, as he confessed, the sight of lepers had been so grievous unto him that he had been minded to avoid not only seeing them, but even going nigh their dwellings. And if at any time he chanced to pass their abodes, or to see them, albeit he were moved by compassion to do them an alms through another person, yet alway would he turn aside his face, stopping his nostrils with his hand. But through the grace of God he became so intimate a friend of the lepers that, even as he recorded in his will, he did sojourn with them and did humbly serve them.

21. But after his visitation of the

lepers, when he became all changed for good, he took with him a comrade whom he dearly loved unto lonely places, saying unto him that he had found a certain great and rich treasure. This man rejoiced not a little, and gladly went with him whensoever he was bidden. Him Francis would take unto a cave underground hard by Assisi, entering it himself alone, and leaving without his comrade anxious to possess the treasure, while he, penetrated by a new and wondrous spirit, would pray unto his Father in secret, desiring that none should know that which he did within save the Lord only, of Whom he earnestly inquired concerning the possession of the heavenly treasure. This when the enemy of mankind perceived, he strove to withdraw him from the good courses whereon he had entered, smiting him with fear and trembling. For there was at Assisi a certain woman hump-backed and misshapen, whom the devil, appearing unto the man of God, brought back unto his remembrance, threatening to set upon his back the hump of that woman unless he would withdraw from the purpose he had conceived. But this

Anguish right valiant knight of Christ, heeding of mind. naught these threats of the devil, prayed within the cave that God would direct his path. Howbeit, he did endure sore anguish and trouble of mind, unable to rest until the work should be done that he had conceived in his mind to do ; divers thoughts followed one another in turn, whereof the importunity did full sorely trouble him. For he glowed within with fire divine, nor was he able to hide outwardly the glow then kindled in his heart. It repented him to have sinned so grievously, and now neither his past evil ways delighted him, nor his present, nor had he as yet received assurance of abstaining from them in future. Moreover, when he would come forth from the cave unto his comrade, he seemed changed into another man.

CHAPTER V

Of the first speech of the Crucified unto him, and how thenceforth he did bear in his heart the Passion of Christ until his death.

13. Now on a day when he was His new ardently beseeching the mercy of God, joy. the Lord shewed him that it should soon be told unto him what he ought to do. And thenceforward he was filled with such joy that he could not contain himself for gladness, albeit he took heed lest he should blab aught of this secret in the ears of men. Cautiously, nevertheless, and speaking as in riddles, he said he was minded not to go into Apulia, but to do noble and mighty deeds in his own country. But when his comrades saw him thus changed,—though in truth he had long been estranged from them in spirit, even while associating with them from time to time in bodily presence,—they again ask him as in jest: “Art thou minded to take ■ wife?” Unto whom he made

The answer by a sort of riddle as before was Crucifix told. Now after a few days he was of S. walking near the Church of S. Damian amian's. when it was told him in the spirit that he should enter to pray therein. And when he had come in, he began to pray right instantly before a certain Image of the Crucified, the which spake unto him in holy and gracious wise, saying : "Francis, seest thou not that My House is being destroyed? Go therefore, and repair Me it." And trembling and astonished he saith : "Gladly will I do it, O Lord." For he understood the saying to be of that Church, which through its exceeding great age seemed like soon to fall. And by that speech thus made unto him he was so filled with joy and so illumined of light that in his soul he felt in very truth that it had been Christ Crucified Who had spoken unto him. Then departing from the Church he found the priest sitting hard by, and setting his hand to his purse, he handed him a certain amount of money, saying : "I beseech thee, sir priest, that thou buy oil and make to burn ever a lamp before the Crucifix, and when this money shall have been spent on the purpose, I will again make

over unto thee so much as then shall S.
be occasion."

francis
bewaileth
the Lord's
Passion.

14. Wherefore from that hour was his heart pierced and melted by the remembrance of the Lord's Passion, for that ever while he lived he did bear in his heart the Stigmata of the Lord Jesus, even as thereafter did most evidently appear from the renewal of those same Stigmata in his body, miraculously wrought and most clearly set forth. Thenceforward he did afflict himself with so great mortification of the body as that, well or ill, he was ever exceeding austere toward his body, and was minded seldom if ever to spare himself. Wherefore when the day of his death was at hand, he confessed that he had sinned much against Brother Body. Now on a time he was walking alone near the Church of S. Mary of the Little Portion, weeping, and wailing with a loud voice. And a devout man hearing him thought he was suffering from some sickness or grief. And, moved by pity toward him, he asked him wherefore he wept. But he said : "I weep for the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, for Whom I ought not to be ashamed to go mourning aloud throughout the whole world." Then

His that other began likewise to weep with
abstinen- him aioud. And often when he rose
ence from prayer, his eyes seemed full of blood,
so much and so bitterly was he wont to
weep. But not with tears alone did he
mortify himself, but also with abstinence
from food and drink, in memory of the
Lord's Passion.

15. Wherefore when at times he was
sitting to eat with laymen, and there were
set before him divers dainty meats pleasant
unto his body, he would taste but little
of them, making some show of excuse,
that he might not appear to have sent
them away on account of fasting. And
when he was eating with the brethren,
he would often strew ashes on the food
that he ate, saying unto the brethren as
a cloak for his abstinence : "Brother
Ash is pure." And once when he had
sat down to eat, a Brother said how the
Blessed Virgin at the hour of meal-time
was so miserably poor that she had naught
to give her Son to eat. Hearing this, the
man of God sighed with heavy grief, and,
leaving the table, ate his bread on the
bare ground. Ofttimes in truth when
he had sat down to eat, a little while after
the beginning of the meal, he would sit
neither eating nor drinking, uplifted in

consideration of heavenly things. At such times, he would fain be hindered by no speech, breathing forth deep sighs from the bottom of his heart. For he would say unto the brethren that always when they heard him sighing thus, they should praise God, and pray for him faithfully. These things concerning his tears and his abstinence we have told incidentally, that we might shew him to have been, after the said vision and speech of the Image of the Crucified, ever conformed unto the Passion of Christ until his death.

CHAPTER VI

How at first he fled from the persecution of his father and kindred, tarrying with the priest of S. Damian, in at whose window he had thrown the money.

S. 16. And so, rejoicing at the said Francis vision and speech of the Crucified, he rose, fortifying himself with the sign of Foligno. ^{at} the Cross, and, mounting his horse, he took stuffs of divers colours and came unto the city called Foligno. There he sold his horse and all the goods that he had carried, and returned forthwith unto the Church of S. Damian. Finding were the poor priest, with great faith and devotion he kissed his hands, and gave him the money that he was carrying, and told him his purpose from beginning to end. The priest, astonished, and marvelling at his sudden conversion, refused to believe this, and, thinking he was being mocked, would not keep the money in his dwelling. But Francis with importunity persisted, striving to make him put faith in his words, and

besought the priest yet more instantly He
to let him tarry with him. At length hideth
the priest yielded to his sojourn there, from per-
but would not receive the money for
fear of his parents. Wherefore the true
despiser of monies flung the same in
at ■ certain window, valuing it no more
than dust. Then, while he was sojourning
in the place aforesaid, his father, like
a careful scout that maketh reconnaiss-
sance, went round about seeking what had
become of his son. And when he heard
that he was thus changed and was now
sojourning in such wise in the place
already spoken of, he was stricken with
inward grief, and, perplexed as to the
sudden turn that things had taken, called
his friends and neighbours together, and
ran with all speed unto the place. But
Francis himself, for that he was but a
new knight of Christ, when he heard the
threats of them that followed him and
perceived their coming, gave way before
his father's anger, and betook him unto a
hidden cavern that he had made ready
for himself unto this end, and there for
■ whole month he lay hidden. Which
cavern was known unto one alone of his
father's household, and here he ate the
food brought unto him at times in secret,

but soon ^{stead-} praying continually with a flood of tears fastly endureth it. that the Lord would deliver him from harmful persecution, and would fulfil his holy vows by His gracious favour.

17. And when in fasting and weeping he had thus waxed fervent, and had besought the Lord continuously, distrusting his own valour and perseverance, he cast his hope wholly upon the Lord, Who had poured forth upon him, albeit abiding in darkness, a gladness unspeakable, and had enlightened him with wondrous illumination. And with such a glow was he all kindled withal that he left his shelter, and started on the way unto Assisi, ever hastening forward steadfast and joyful. Safeguarded by the armour of trust, Christ glowing with divine fervour, reproaching himself with his cloathing empty fear, he openly gave himself unto the hands and blows of them that persecuted him. When they saw him, his former acquaintance upbraided him with contempt, crying out on him as a madman and one beside himself, and flung the mud of the streets and stones at him. For, perceiving him thus changed from his former ways, and worn out by mortification of the flesh, they imputed everything he did to want of food and madness.

Nevertheless, the soldier of Christ passed His father's wrath on through it all even as one deaf, neither broken down nor changed by any injury done him, but giving God thanks. And when such a report of him had arisen in the places and streets of the city, at last it reached his father. But he, when he heard that such things were being done unto his son by his fellow-citizens, rose up forthwith to seek him, not that he might set him free, but rather that he might destroy him. For, setting no measure on his wrath, he ran upon him even as a wolf toward a sheep, with cruel eye and crafty countenance, and so laid hands in unfatherly wise upon him, dragging him into the house, where for many days he shut him up in a dark prison, endeavouring with words and stripes to bend back his mind unto the vanities of this world.

18. Natheless was Francis moved neither by words, nor by blows out by stripes, hearing all patiently, and only rendered thereby yet more eager for his holy purpose, and stronger to pursue it. For when his father left home, on a call of pressing need, his mother, who alone abode with him, misliking her husband's treatment of him, spake unto her son

and with gentle entreaty. And for that she could not withdraw him from his holy purpose, yet did the bowels of her pity so yearn toward him that she brake his bonds, and let him go forth free. He then, giving thanks unto Almighty God, returned unto the place where he had been afore, and, making use of a larger freedom, as he that had been proven by the temptations of devils and had learnt his lesson by the trial, took heart of grace, and stepped forward the freer and the nobler from the wrongs he had suffered. In the meanwhile his father returned, and, not finding his son, heaped sin on sin by flinging his reproaches at his wife.

19. Then he ran unto the Palace of the Commune, complaining of his son before the Consuls, ~~the~~ ^{the} city, demanding that they deliver Peter restored unto him. ~~the~~ ^{the} money ~~of~~ ^{of} God ~~she~~ ^{had} carried away, ~~leaving~~ ^{leaving} with him all there was in the house. And the Consuls seeing him thus ~~wretched~~, ^{wretched} grief and wrath, ~~and~~ ^{and} an apparitor to appear before clothes. And as ~~he~~ ^{that} made answer unto the apparitor ~~that~~ ^{had} through the grace of God he had now become free, and was no longer bound by the Consuls, for that he was the

servant of God Most High alone. Then the Consuls, not minded to use force with him, said unto his father : ■ From the time he entered the service of God, he hath gone out of our jurisdiction." His father then, seeing that from the Consuls he would gain naught, laid the same complaint before the Bishop of the city. The Bishop, a wise and discreet man, summoned Francis in manner due to appear and make answer unto his father's complaint. And he made answer unto the messenger : " Unto the lord Bishop will I come, for he is the father and lord of souls." He came therefore unto the Bishop, and was received by him with great joy. And unto him the Bishop saith : " Thy father is sore vexed against thee and offended. Now therefore, if thou desirest to be the servant of God, give bar .. what money thou hast, " perchance it were ill-gotten, " doa desireth not that thou shouldst use in the work of the Church, by rear .. father, whose ? " it again.

" then faith in the Lord, my son, and play the man, and fear not, for Himself will be thy Helper, and will give thee in abundance whatso-

S. ever is needful for the work of His
Francis Church."

renounc-

eth all

20. Thereupon the man of God rose up, gladdened and consoled by the words of the Bishop, and brought the money before him, saying unto him : " My lord, I will give back unto him with a light heart not only the money that belongeth unto him, but my clothes also." And going into the Bishop's chamber, he did off all his clothes, and laid them with the money before the Bishop and the other bystanders, and went forth naked, saying : " Hear all ye, and understand :—until now have I called Peter Bernardone my father, but, for that I purpose to serve the Lord, I give back unto him the money, over which he was vexed, and all the clothes that I have had of him, desiring to say only, " Our Father; Which art in Heaven," not " my father, Peter Bernardone." Then was the man of God seen to have a hair-shirt next his skin under his bright-coloured garments. Then his father rose up, hot with grief and wrath, and took the money, and all the clothes. And as he carried them home, they that had witnessed the spectacle were moved to indignation against him for that he left no one of the clothes unto his son. And

moved with compassion toward Francis, and is
they began to weep bitterly. The ^{consoled} _{of the} Bishop,
Bishop, moreover, regarding his courage
and fervour of devotion, and greatly
marvelling at his constancy, put his arms
round him and covered him with his pall.
For he perceived right clearly that his
deed had been of Divine inspiration, and
knew that the things he had seen held
promise of no small import. Wherefore
from thenceforward he became his helper,
exhorting and cherishing him, and guid-
ing and embracing him in the bonds of
love.

CHAPTER VII

Of his exceeding great toil and pains in repairing the Church of S. Damian, and how he began to conquer himself by going for alms.

The 21. On this wise Francis, the servant of God, stripped of all worldly goods, giveth himself up unto the divine justice, and despiseth his own life so as to yield himself up unto the service of God in all ways he may. Returning unto the Church of S. Damian, glad and fervent in spirit, he took unto himself as it were an hermit's habit, and comforted the priest of that Church with the same words wherewith he had been himself comforted by the Bishop. Then rising up, he went into the city, and began to praise the Lord aloud, as one drunk with the Spirit, through the places and the streets. Then when he had ended his praising of the Lord after this sort, he turned him to the gaining of stones for the repairing of the said Church, and said : "He that shall give me one stone, shall have one reward,

but he that shall give two, shall have two rewards, yea, and he that giveth three, shall have three rewards." These and many other simple words would he say in the fervour of his spirit, for as a foolish man and simple, chosen of God, did he speak, not in learned words of human wisdom, but behaving him in all things as a simple man. Many, indeed, would laugh him to scorn, thinking him mad, but others, stirred by compassion, were moved to tears, seeing him to have come so quickly from such wantonness and worldly vanity as it were into a very intoxication of the Divine love. But he, scorning all derision, did ever give God thanks in fervour of spirit. How great his toil in the work aforesaid it were long and hard to tell. For he that had been so dainty in his father's home did carry the stones on his own shoulders, afflicting himself with manifold burdens in the service of God.

22. But the priest aforesaid, thinking on the toil that he had taken on him so fervently, beyond his strength, in his Divine obedience, was fain to purvey him, poor though he were, some fare beyond the common. For he knew that he had lived delicately in the world. And truly,

Begging as the man of God did himself afterward his bread, confess, he did ofttimes provide him of rich syrups and confections, and did shun distasteful meats. But when on ■ day the priest told him that which he had been doing for him, he said unto himself : “ Wilt thou find this priest, wherever thou mayst go, to shew thee such courtesy ? This is not the life of a poor man, which thou didst desire to choose, but, even as the poor man goeth from door to door carrying his beggar’s dish in his hand, and so as need doth compel, gathereth together a medley of various victuals, thus of thine own free will oughtest thou to live, for the love of Him Who was born poor and did most poorly live in this world, and remained naked and poor upon the Cross, and was buried in another’s sepulchre.” Therefore on a day he took a dish, and came into the city, going from door to door asking an alms. And when he had set divers victuals in his bowl, many marvelled, that knew him to have lived so delicately, beholding him thus wondrously changed into such contempt of himself. But when he would have eaten that medley of various meats, at first he shrank back, for that he had never been used

willingly even to see, much less to eat, His such scraps. At length, conquering himself, he began to eat, and it seemed unto him that in eating no rich syrup had he ever tasted aught so delightsome. Thenceforward so did his heart exult in the Lord that his flesh, albeit feeble and afflicted, was strengthened to bear gladly all things harsh and bitter for the Lord's sake. Moreover he gave God thanks, for that He had changed bitter into sweet for him, and had consoled him in manifold wise. So he bade that priest from that time purvey no food for him, or cause to be purveyed.

23. Then his father, seeing him set in such poor estate, was filled with sorrow exceeding. For by reason that he had loved him much, he felt shamed, and did so grieve over him, seeing his flesh as it were dead from exceeding mortification and cold, that, wheresoever he chanced on him, he would curse him. But the man of God, having regard unto the curses of his father, took unto him a poor man and despised to be his father. And he saith unto him : "Come with me, and I will give thee of the alms which shall be given me. And when thou shalt see my father curse me, I for my part will

The say unto thee, ‘Bless me, my father,
beggar’s blessing. and thou shalt make the sign of the Cross
over me and bless me in his stead.’” So
then, whenas that poor man blessed him,
the man of God would say unto his
father: “Thinkest thou not that God
can give me a father to bless me, to set
against thy curses?” Moreover, many
of them that mocked him, seeing that
albeit he were mocked, he bare all thus
patiently, marvelled with exceeding
amazement. Once in winter time when
he had risen betimes to pray, clad in
wretchedly poor clothes, his brother after
the flesh passed by him, and said unto one
of his fellow-citizens tauntingly: “Bid
Francis sell thee at least one penny-
worth of his sweat.” Which hearing,
the man of God, filled with salutary
joy, in the fervour of his spirit made
answer in French: “I,” saith he,
“will sell right dear that sweat unto
my Lord.”

24. But while he was toiling diligently
in the work of the Church whereof we
have spoken, being minded that in that
Church lamps should burn continually,
he would go through the city to beg oil;
but once when he had come unto a
certain house, seeing sundry men as-

sembled there for a game, he was ashamed Alms
in their presence to ask an alms, and withdrew. Then, communing with him-
self, he reproached himself with having sinned, and running unto the place where the game was being played, he told his sin in the presence of all the bystanders, —that he had been ashamed to ask alms because of them. And with a fervent spirit he drew nigh unto that house, and in French asked an alms for the love of God, for the lamps of the Church afore-said. And continuing with other fellow-labourers in the said task, he would cry with a loud voice in the joy of the Spirit unto the inhabitants, saying unto them in French : “Come, and help me in the work of the Church of S. Damian, which shall be the convent of Ladies, by whose good report and life our Heavenly Father shall be glorified in the universal Church.” Behold how he was filled with the spirit of prophecy, insomuch as that he truly foretold what was to be ! For this is that holy place wherein the famous Religion and most illustrious Order of the Poor Ladies and holy virgins took its rise, scarce six years after the conversion of the Blessed Francis, by means of the same Blessed Francis. And their wondrous

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of the life and famous Rule was more fully con-
^{Poor} firmed by the lord Pope Gregory IX. of
Clares. saintly memory, at that time Bishop of
Ostia, with the authority of the Apostolic
See.

CHAPTER VIII

How by hearing and understanding the monitions of Christ in the Gospel, he did at once change his outer garb, and did put on a new garb of perfection both within and without.

25. Now the Blessed Francis, at the time when the work of the Church of S. poverty. Damian was finished, was wearing the habit of an hermit, carrying a staff in his hand, and walked with his feet shod with sandals, girt with a leather belt. But hearing on a day at the celebration of Mass those words that Christ spake unto His disciples when He sent them forth to preach, that they should carry on their journey neither gold nor silver, nor wallet, nor staff, nor have sandals nor two coats, and understanding these words more clearly afterward from that same priest, he was filled with joy unspeakable ; “This,” saith he, “is that which I am fain with all my might to fulfil.” Wherefore, committing unto memory all that he had heard, he strove joyrully to fulfil

The the same, casting aside without delay
Fore-runner. whatsoever he had two of, from thence-forward he used neither staff, sandals, purse, nor wallet ; but, making for himself a right sorry and rough tunic, he threw aside his leather belt, and took for a girdle a rope. Moreover, applying all the anxious endeavour of his heart unto the words of this new grace, by what means he might persevere in that work, he began by Divine intuition to be the herald of Gospel perfection, and to preach repentance in simple wise in public. Nor were his words empty, nor meet for laughter, but full of the might of the Holy Spirit, piercing unto the marrow of the heart, insomuch as that his hearers were rapt in amazement as they listened.

26. Now as he afterward himself bare witness, this was the manner of his salutation, that the Lord had revealed unto him : "The Lord give thee peace." Wherefore in all his preaching, he would salute the people at the outset by proclaiming peace. And a marvellous thing it is, and not to be accounted for but by miracle, that he had before his conversion a forerunner in making known this salutation, even one that oftentimes went throughout Assisi giving salutation in this

wise : "Peace and good, peace and good." S.
From which we must firmly believe that,
^{S.} Francis'
even as John the forerunner of Christ did
decrease whenas Christ began to preach,
had been a forerunner of the Blessed
Francis in proclaiming peace. He too,
after the coming of the other, did not
shew himself as afore. Thus straight-
way Francis, the man of God, following
on the heels of his said herald, filled with
the spirit of the prophets, in words like
unto theirs, did proclaim peace, and preach
salvation, and many by his salutary moni-
tions became allies of the true peace, who
had been aliens from Christ, far from
salvation.

27. Now when the truth of this so
simple teaching of the Blessed Francis
and of his life no less simple became
manifest unto many, certain men, two
years after his conversion, began by his
ensample to turn their minds unto repen-
tance, and, laying aside all things, to join
themselves with him in the same habit
and life. First of these was Brother
Bernard of saintly memory, who, behold-
ing the endurance and fervour of the
Blessed Francis in the Divine service,—
how, ■ wit, with much toil he did repair

inspireth ruined churches, and did lead an austere Messer Bernard life, whereas he knew that he had lived delicately in the world,—purposed in his heart to bestow all that he had upon the poor, and to cleave fast unto that other in life and habit. So on a day he went secretly unto the man of God and made known unto him his purpose, and agreed with him that on such an evening he should come unto his house. Upon hearing this, the Blessed Francis, giving God thanks, rejoiced exceedingly, seeing that he had as yet no companion, and in especial for that Messer Bernard was a man of great edification.

28. So the Blessed Francis did come unto his house on the evening appointed, with great uplifting of heart, and tarried with him that whole night. And among other things Messer Bernard said unto him : “ If a man had received from his lord many or few things, and had kept them for many years, and were minded no longer to keep them, what could he do with them for the best ? ” The Blessed Francis made answer that he ought to return them unto his lord from whom he had received them. And Messer Bernard saith : “ Therefore, Brother, all my worldly goods I wish to bestow, for

the love of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave them unto me, in such fashion as shall seem best unto thee." To whom said the holy man : "At earliest dawn will we go to church, and by the book of the Gospels we shall learn in what way the Lord taught His disciples." Rising therefore early, with another, by name Peter, who also was minded to become a Brother, they came unto the Church of S. Nicholas, hard by the market-place of Assisi, and, entering therein to pray, for that they were unlettered, and knew not where to find the word of the Gospel as to renunciation of the world, they prayed the Lord devoutly that in the first opening of the Book He would deign to shew unto them His will.

29. When their prayers were at an end, the Blessed Francis, taking the shut Book, and bowing before the altar, did open the same, and at the first opening thereof was discovered that counsel of the Lord : "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." At this opening, the Blessed Francis rejoiced greatly, and gave God thanks, but, for that he was a true worshipper of

declareth the Trinity, he desired it to be confirmed
their by thrice-repeated witness, and opened
Rule. the Book ■ second and a third time.
And in the second opening was discovered
that passage beginning : “Take nothing
with you on your journey.” And in the
third, that other beginning : “He that
will come after Me let him deny him-
self.” Thereupon the Blessed Francis,
at each opening of the Book, gave God
thanks for the confirmation of his own
purpose and long-conceived desire, thrice
divinely declared and manifested unto
him, and said unto his companions afore-
said, to wit, unto Bernard and Peter :
“My brothers, this is our life and Rule,
and that of all who shall wish to join our
company. Go therefore, and fulfil that
ye have heard.” So Messer Bernard, who
was rich exceedingly, went and sold all
that he had, and, collecting much money,
gave it all among the poor of the city.
Peter also according unto his power ful-
filled the Divine counsel. Then, having
parted with all their goods, they twain at
the same time put on the habit that the
holy man had taken not long before, after
he did give up the hermit’s habit, and
from that hour they lived together with
him after the manner of the Holy Gospel

shewn unto them by the Lord. And They
thus the Blessed Francis said in his will : obey the
“The Lord Himself revealed unto me that
I ought to live after the manner of the
Holy Gospel.”

CHAPTER IX

Of the manner of the vocation of Brother Silvester, and of the vision that he had before entering the Order.

Silvester 30. Now while, as hath been said, his Messer Bernard was giving his goods in avarice. largesse unto the poor, the Blessed Francis was present, beholding the efficacy of the Lord's working, and magnifying that Lord in his heart, and praising Him aloud. But there came by a priest, by name Silvester, of whom the Blessed Francis had bought stones for the repairing of the Church of S. Damian ; whereupon, seeing that so great a sum of money was being spent under the advice of the man of God, the flame of coveteousness was kindled in him, and he said unto him : "Francis, thou hast not paid me in full for the stones that thou didst buy of me." Hearing him thus unjustly complain, the despiser of avarice went unto Messer Bernard, and, placing his hand in his cloak, where was the money, with great fervour of spirit he drew it forth full of

coins, and gave them unto the priest that He redid complain. And again a second time penteth. filling his hands, he said unto him : “ Hast thou now thy payment in full, sir priest ? ” And he replieth : “ I have it in full, Brother,” and in joy he returneth home with the money thus received.

31. But after a few days the same priest, inspired of the Lord, began to ponder those things that the Blessed Francis had wrought, and said within himself : “ Am not I a wretched man, who in mine old age do greedily covet worldly goods, while this youth, for the love of God, despiseth and escheweth them ? ” And the night following, he saw in a dream an immeasurable Cross, whereof the top touched the sky, and the foot was set in the mouth of Francis, and its arms were stretched from the one side of the world unto the other. Then the priest, awakening, did acknowledge and believe of a certainty that Francis was the true friend and servant of Christ, and that the Religion he had begun would presently spread throughout the whole world. Wherefore he began to fear God, and to do penance in his house. Then at last after a brief space he entered the Order then already begun, and therein did

Brother full worthily live and gloriously end his
Giles. days.

32. Now Francis the man of God, joined by two brethren, as hath been said, for that he had no hostel wherein he might sojourn with them, betook him together with them unto a poor little forsaken church that was called S. Mary of the Little Portion. And they made there one little cell, wherein they abode together for a while. Now after some days, a man of Assisi, Giles by name, did come unto them, and with great reverence and devotion, on bended knees, did beseech the man of God that he would receive him into his fellowship. Him the man of God perceived to be most faithful and devout, and for that he had obtained much grace of God, as afterward appeared from the result, did right gladly receive him. Then these four were joined together in exceeding gladness, and in the joy of the Holy Spirit, and did separate themselves for a greater enterprise after this fashion.

33. The Blessed Francis taking with him Brother Giles went into the March of Ancona, while the other twain betook them unto another province. They then, going into the March, did exult mightily

in the Lord, and the holy man, singing praises in French with a voice loud and clear, would bless and magnify the goodness of the Most High. Even such gladness was in them as though they had found a great treasure in the Gospel field of the Lady Poverty, for love of whom they had freely and gladly despised all worldly goods as dung. For the holy man said unto Brother Giles : “Our Religion is like unto a fisherman that casteth his nets into the water, catching a plentiful multitude of fishes, and, leaving the small ones in the water, chooseth out the large ones for his basket.” In this wise did he prophesy the spread of the Order. But albeit the man of God did not as yet preach fully unto the people, yet whensoever he was passing through the cities or anigh the castles, he would admonish all that they should love and fear God, and do penance for their sins. Brother Giles on his part would exhort them that heard to believe him, for that none could give them better counsel.

34. And they that heard would say : “Who are these men, and what manner of words are these that they speak ?” For at that time the love and fear of God were everywhere extinct, and the way of

Parable
of the
fisher-
man.

Gospel penitence was utterly unknown, nay, was life held to be foolishness. For so mightily judged by the world. covetousness of the world, and the pride of life, that the whole world seemed utterly given up unto these three malignant influences. Therefore opinion was diverse as to these men of Gospel life. For some would say they were fools, or drunken, while others would protest that such words came not forth from foolishness. And one that heard them said : “ Either they have cleaved unto the Lord for the sake of attaining unto the highest perfection, or assuredly they are mad, for their way of life seemeth intolerable, seeing that their fare is scanty, they walk barefoot, and are clad in the meanest of garments.” Nevertheless, albeit that some were smitten with apprehension when they beheld the manner of their conversation, not as yet did any follow after them ; rather did the younger women, seeing them afar off, flee in terror, lest perchance they should be led away by their foolishness or madness. Now when they had journeyed round that province, they returned unto the said place of S. Mary.

35. And after that ■ few days were passed, there came unto them yet other

three men of Assisi, to wit, Sabbatino, Three
Morico, and John de Cappella, beseeching ^{new} Brethren.
the Blessed Francis that he would receive
them among the brethren, and he did
receive them humbly and graciously.
But when they were asking an alms
through the city, scarce any man would
give unto them, but upbraided them,
saying that they had given up their own
goods to the end that they might devour
those of other men, and thus did they
endure the uttermost penury. Their
parents also, and kindred, persecuted
them. And others of the city made a
mock of them as though they had lost
their wits, and were fools, for at that
time was no man wont to give up his
goods that he might ask alms from door
to door. Then the Bishop of the city of
Assisi, unto whom the man of God
would ofttimes go for counsel, receiving
him graciously, said unto him : "Hard
and harsh seemeth unto me your life, to
wit, to possess naught in this world."
To him saith the holy man : "My lord,
if we should have possessions, we should
need arms to protect ourselves. For
thence arise disputes, and law-suits, and
for this cause the love of God and of our
neighbour is wont ofttimes to be hindered,

The wherefore we be minded to possess
praise of naught of worldly goods in this world.”
poverty. And the Bishop was much pleased with
the answer of the man of God, who
despised all transitory things, and money
in especial, so utterly that in all his
Rules he praised most chiefly poverty, and
would fain have all the brethren zealous
to eschew money ;—for he made divers
Rules, and essayed them, before he made
that which at the last he left unto the
brethren. Wherefore in one of them he
said, as to the abhorrence of money : “ Let
us take heed, who have given up all, lest
for so slight a thing we lose the kingdom
of heaven. And if we find money in any
place, let us care for it no more than for
the dust that we tread under foot.”

CHAPTER X

How he foretold unto his six companions all things that should come upon them as they went through the world.

36. S. Francis, for that he was now S. enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, calling unto him the said six brethren, foretold them those things that were to come. “Dearest brethren,” saith he, “let us consider our vocation, unto which God in His mercy hath called us, not so much for our own salvation, as for that of the many, wherefore let us go through the world, admonishing all peoples both by ensample and by word to do penance and to be mindful of the commands of God. Fear ye not, for that ye seem weak and despised and foolish, but with easy minds preach repentance in simple wise, trusting in the Lord, Who hath overcome the world, for that by His Spirit He speaketh through you, and in you, to admonish all men that they do turn unto Him, and keep His commandments. Ye will find some

Francis sendeth forth

the men that be faithful, gentle, and gracious,
Brethren who will receive you and your words
to preach peace. with joy, and others, the more part, that
be faithless, proud, and blasphemous, who
with reviling will oppose you, and against
these shall ye speak. Be it set therefore
in your hearts to bear all things patiently
and humbly."

37. And he gave them his blessing. And thus blessed the men of God departed, devoutly observing his behests. When they came on a Church, or wayside Crucifix, they would bow in prayer, and say devoutly : "We adore Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee, in all Thy Churches that be in the whole world, for that by Thy Holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world." For he was persuaded that it was alway a place of the Lord wheresoever they found were it only a Crucifix. And all that saw them marvelled exceedingly, for that in habit and way of life they were unlike all others, and seemed like uplandish men. Wheresoever they entered in, were it city, or castle, or farm, or house, they brought the message of peace, consoling all, and bidding them fear and love the Maker of heaven and earth, and keep His commandments. Some heard them

gladly, others in contrary wise mocked them, and by many they were asked whence they came, and of what Order they were. To whom, albeit it were toilsome to make answer unto so many enquiries, they nevertheless simply confessed that they were penitents, natives of the city of Assisi,—for as yet their Order was not confirmed as a Religion.

38. Many thought them deceivers, or deceived, nor were minded to receive them into their houses, lest they might prove to be thieves who would carry off their goods by stealth. Wherefore in many places after injury had been done unto them, they would shelter in the porches of Churches or of houses.

39. For, as hath been said, when both small and great did revile and injure them, they would at times tear from them even the very beggarly garments they had. Then when the servants of God were left naked, for that according unto the precept of the Gospel they wore one tunic only, they would not petition for that which had been seized to be restored unto them. If indeed any, moved by pity, were minded to restore that which had been seized, they received it back gladly. Some would place dice

and in their hands, and ask if they v
patience. minded to play. Others taking hold
their hoods from behind would c
them on their backs as though han
by an halter. These and suchlike ■
rages did they unto them, thinking th
so despicable that they did boldly torment
them even as they would. Mani
moreover were the tribulations they
dured, and narrow were the str
wherethrough they did pass
reason of hunger and thirst and cold
nakedness. Natheless these theyore
with constancy and patience as t^h had
been exhorted by the Blessed Frat.
nor were they thereby cast down w
sadness, nor did they speak evil w
them that did evil entreat them. I
instance, about this time two of the
were at Florence, and they went through
the city seeking a lodging yet could find
none. But when they came unto
certain house that had an oven in the
porch, they said the one unto the other
“Here we may take shelter.” Accord
ingly they asked the mistress of the house
to receive them within the house, and
upon her refusal to do this, they said
humbly that perchance she would allow
them for that night at least to rest nea

the oven. This she granted, but her ~~Shelter~~ husband, when that he came and found ~~refused~~ them in the porch, called his wife and said unto her: "Wherefore hast thou granted these ribalds shelter in our porch?" She made answer that she had refused to receive them into the house, but had granted them to lie without the porch, where they could steal naught save the wood. So her husband would not allow that any shelter should be given unto them, albeit the cold was great, for that he thought them to be ribalds and thieves. That night, therefore, until morn they lay near the oven, sleeping but lightly, warmed only by the glow Divine, and covered only by the shelter of the Lady Poverty, and then went unto a Church hard by to hear mattins.

40. When morning came, the woman went unto that same Church, and seeing there those brethren continuing devoutly in prayer, she said within herself: "Were these men ribalds and thieves, as said my husband, they would not thus continue reverently in prayer." While she was pondering these things inwardly, behold, a man named Guido was bestowing alms on the poor that were waiting in that Church, and when he had come unto the

Brother brethren, and would fain have given unto
Ber-
nard's
answer. each of them money, as he was giving
unto the rest, they refused his money,
and would not take it. But he said unto
them : " Wherefore do ye, being poor,
not take money as do the rest ? " Replied
Brother Bernard : " True is it that we be
poor, but poverty is not a hard thing
unto us, as unto the other poor, for
by the grace of God, Whose counsel we
have fulfilled, of our own accord have we
made ourselves poor." At this the mar-
velled, and, asking them if they ha^d
ever had possessions, he learnt from them
that they had had great possessions, but fo
the love of God had given all unto the poor.
For he that thus made answer was the
Brother Bernard, the second to the
Blessed Francis, whom to-day we truly
hold as our most holy father ; he was
the first to embrace the message of peace
and repentance, and did run to follow the
holy man of God, and, selling all that he
had, and giving it unto the poor accord-
ing unto the counsel of Gospel perfection,
did continue unto the end in most holy
poverty. Wherefore the said woman,
taking thought upon this, that the
brethren would have none of the money
went unto them and said that gladl

would she receive them into her house, They are if they would come thither for the sake of being her guests. To whom they humbly made answer : "The Lord repay thee for thy goodwill." But the man aforesaid, hearing that the brethren had not been able to find a lodging, brought them into his house, saying : "Behold a lodging made ready for you of the Lord, abide therein according unto your good pleasure." And they, giving God thanks, abode with him for some days, edifying him both by ensample and by word in the fear of the Lord, so that thereafter he bestowed much of his wealth on the poor.

CHAPTER XI

*Of the reception of other four brethren,
and of the most glowing love that the
first brethren had toward one another,
and of their zeal for work, and for
prayer, and of their perfect obedience.*

The 41. Now when men saw that the Brethren brethren amid their trials were uplifted, forgive and that they continued zealously and their persecutors devoutly in prayer, and did neither accept money, nor carry any, and that they had the greatest love toward one another, by the which they were known of a truth to be disciples of the Lord, many were pricked to the heart, and came unto them, beseeching pardon for the wrongs that they had inflicted upon them. And the brethren did forgive them from their heart, saying: "The Lord pardon you," and exhorted them concerning their salvation in salutary wise. Some there were moreover that asked those brethren to receive them into their fellowship, and, for that all they six had been granted licence from

the Blessed Francis to receive men into They
the Order, by reason of the fewness of receive
brethren, they did receive divers others others
into their fellowship, and with them that into the
Order. they thus received, at the time appointed,
they one and all returned unto S. Mary
of the Little Portion. And when they
beheld one another again, they were filled
with such gladness and rejoicing as that
naught was had in remembrance by them
of the things that they had suffered from
evil men. They were zealous each day
in prayer, and in working with their
hands, that they might altogether put
away from them all slothfulness that
warreth against the soul. They would
rise at midnight in their zeal, and pray
most devoutly with measureless weeping
and sighing. They cherished one another
with a right inward love, and served each
the other, and nourished him, even as a
mother doth her only and well-beloved
son. Such a charity did burn within
them that it seemed easy unto them to
yield their bodies unto death, not for the
love of Christ alone, but also for the
salvation of the souls, nay, even of the
bodies of their brethren.

42. Thus, for instance, on a day when
two of these brethren were walking

Their together, they chanced on a fool natural, mutual that took up stones to cast at them. charity, Whereupon one of them, seeing that stones were cast at the other, did forthwith plant himself in the way to ward off the blows of the stones, being minded rather that himself should be stricken than his brother, by reason of the mutual charity wherewith they were fired, yea, thus were they ready one for the other to lay down his life. For in humility and in charity were they founded, and in such wise rooted therein, as that each would reverence other as his father and lord, and they that did excel by reason or being set in authority, or in virtue of any special grace, did shew them more humble and lowly than the rest. Moreover, they did all yield them utterly unto obedience, ever making themselves ready to obey him that did enjoin them aught, nor did they make distinction between the just and the unjust, for that whatsoever was commanded they thought to be according unto the will of the Lord, wherefore to fulfil that which was enjoined was unto them an easy task and a pleasant. But from the lusts of the flesh they did abstain, anxiously passing judgment upon themselves, and taking

heed moreover lest one should cause ^{obedi-}
another in any wise to offend. <sup>ence, and
humility.</sup>

43. If at any time it betided that one spake unto another a word that might vex him, so much did his conscience prick him that he could not rest until he had told his fault, prostrating himself humbly on the ground, that he might make the foot of the brother he had vexed be laid on his own mouth. And if the brother that had been vexed were loth to lay his foot on his mouth,—that is, on the mouth of that other,—then if he that had vexed him were in authority, he would command the brother to lay his foot on his mouth ; if he were one subject unto him, he would make him be commanded to do so by one that was superior. In this wise would they endeavour to put far from them all bitterness and malice, and to preserve ever among them a perfect loving-kindness, striving with all their might to set over against any special vice some special virtue, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ working with them and preventing them in all their ways. Nor did they claim aught as belonging unto any one of them, but the books and other things granted unto them they had in common,

In according unto the manner handed down poverty and observed from the Apostles. But free-handed, albeit it were true poverty that dwelt in them and among them, yet were they free-handed and generous with all granted unto them for the sake of the Lord, giving freely of the alms bestowed on them, for the love of Him, unto all that asked, and in especial unto the poor.

44. Whensoever on their journeys they did find by the way beggars asking aught from them for the love of God, and they had naught else to offer, they would give them some part of their clothes, sorry as these were. At whiles they gave their hood, cutting it off from the tunic, at whiles the sleeve, that they might fulfil that Gospel command: "Give unto him that asketh of thee." Once on a day a beggar came unto the Church of S. Mary of the Little Portion, wherein the brethren were sojourning for ■ time, and asked an alms. There was a cloak there, which had belonged unto a lay brother, who, when the Blessed Francis bade him give it unto that beggar, gladly and speedily gave it him. And that very moment, by reason of the reverence and devotion which that brother shewed in giving the cloak unto the beggar, it

seemed unto him that his alms had gone rejoicing up into heaven, and he felt himself ful-^{in the} filled of a joy unknown before. ^{Lord.}

45. Whensoever rich men did turn aside in this manner unto them, they received them eagerly and graciously, striving to recall them from evil, and to stir them up unto repentance. Zealously moreover did they seek not to be sent unto the land of their birth, that they might shun familiarity and friendship with their own kindred, and thus observe the saying of the prophet : “ I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children.” In poverty they did rejoice exceedingly, for that they were not greedy after riches, but despised all transitory things such as might be greedily desired by the lovers of this world. Money in especial they would tread under foot as dust, and, even as they had been taught by the holy man, would weigh it at the same price and weight as asses’ dung. They rejoiced in the Lord continually, having naught within them or without that could in any wise make them sad. For the further they were sundered from the world, so much the nigher were they joined unto the Lord. Walking in the way of the

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The Cross, and in the paths of justice, they
~~narrow~~ did remove stumbling-blocks from the
~~way.~~ narrow way of repentance and of Gospel
observance, so that the path of them that
followed after might be made even and
sure.

CHAPTER XII

How the Blessed Francis with eleven companions went unto the Curia of the Pope, that he might notify unto him his purpose, and make be confirmed the Rule that he had written.

46. Now the Blessed Francis, perceiving that his brethren were increasing in merit and in number, for that now they were twelve most perfect men, all of a like mind, spake unto those eleven, himself the twelfth, saying : "I perceive, brethren, that the Lord is minded of His mercy to increase our fellowship. Let us go therefore unto our Mother, the Holy Roman Church, and notify unto the Pope that which the Lord hath begun to work through us, that by his good pleasure and command we may carry on that which we have begun." Then since the words of the Father seemed good unto the other brethren, together with him they took their journey unto the Curia, whereupon the Blessed Francis said unto them :

S.
Francis
is
minded to
seek the
Pope.

They "Let us make one of our number our leader, and let us hold him as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, so that according unto his will, whither he goeth we shall go, and where he lodgeth there also will we lodge." And they chose Brother Bernard, the first after the Blessed Francis, and as the Father had said so did they. Thus rejoicing they went on their way, and did speak the words of the Lord, not venturing to speak aught save that which pertained unto the praise and glory of God, and unto the profit of the soul, and oftentimes they gave themselves up unto prayer. And the Lord ever made ready a lodging for them, causing all needful things to be ministered unto them.

47. When they had come unto Rome, they found there the Bishop of the city of Assisi, and were received by him with exceeding joy, for he did reverence the Blessed Francis and all the brethren with especial favour. Nevertheless, being ignorant of the reason of their coming, he began to be troubled, fearing lest they were minded to leave their own province, wherein the Lord had begun through them to work marvels. For he rejoiced greatly to have such men in his bishopric, men whose life and conversation he took

to be of passing great promise ; but when ^{The lord John thei advocate} he had heard the reason, and understood their intent, he rejoiced much, offering them unto this end counsel and help. This same Bishop was known unto the Cardinal of S. Sabina, by name the lord John of S. Paul, a man full of the grace of God, loving beyond all other the servants of God. To him the said Bishop had made known the life of the Blessed Francis, and of his brethren, wherefore he himself was fain to behold the man of God, and some of his brethren. Hearing that they were in the City, he sent for them, and received them with great reverence and devotion.

48. Tarrying with him for a few days, they so edified him by their holy discourse and ensample that, seeing how manifestly that which he had heard concerning them did shine forth in their work, he commended himself unto their prayers humbly and devoutly, furthermore beseeching as of especial grace that from thenceforward he might be counted as one of the brethren. At last, asking the Blessed Francis wherefore he had come, and hearing from him all his purpose and intent, he offered himself to be his advocate with the Curia. Wherefore the said Cardinal

The went unto the Curia, and said unto the lord Pope Innocent III. : "I have found a man of most perfect life, that is minded to live conformably with the Holy Gospel, and to observe in all things Gospel perfection : through whom, as I believe, the Lord is minded to reform throughout the whole world the faith of Holy Church." Which hearing, the lord Pope marvelled much, and bade the Cardinal bring the Blessed Francis unto him.

49. So upon the day following the man of God was presented by the said Cardinal before the Pope, unto whom he laid bare all his holy purpose. The Pope himself, for that he was gifted in especial wise with discernment, assented after the wonted manner unto the petition of the holy man, and gave him his blessing, saying : "Go with the Lord, brethren, and even as the Lord shall deign to inspire you, do ye preach repentance unto all. But when God Almighty shall have multiplied you with a greater fellowship, and grace, bring word unto us, and we will grant more unto you than this, and will commit unto you greater powers with more assurance." Howbeit, for that the lord Pope was minded to know whether the things granted or to be granted were

in accordance with the will of God, before assurance the holy man left his presence, he said of God's will unto him and his companions : " Little children mine, this life of yours seemeth unto us too hard and rough, for albeit we believe your fervency to be such as that it would ill become us to doubt you, nevertheless must we have regard unto them that shall follow after you, lest this way shall seem too harsh for them." Yet when he had seen the constancy of their faith, and that their anchor of hope was most firmly fixed in Christ, insomuch as that they would not be turned aside from their fervency of spirit, he said unto the Blessed Francis : " Go, my son, and pray God that He reveal unto thee whether that ye seek cometh of His will, so that we, being assured of the Lord's will, may accede unto thy desire."

50. While therefore the holy man was praying unto God, even as the lord Pope had proposed unto him, the Lord spake unto him in spirit by a parable, saying : " A certain woman, poor but comely, abode in a wilderness, and a great King, marvelling at her beauty, did desire greatly to take her to wife, thinking she would bear him fair sons. And after that they had been betrothed and wedded,

The many sons were born unto them and
parable of
nurtured, unto whom the mother spake
the poor
after this wise : " My sons, be not
woman. ashamed, seeing that ye be King's sons.
Wherefore go unto his Court, and he
himself will minister unto you all things
needful." So when they had come unto
the King, the King marvelled at their
beauty, seeing moreover in them his own
likeness, and he said unto them : " Whose
sons be ye ? " Unto whom they made
answer that they were the sons of a poor
woman sojourning in the wilderness, and
therewithal the King did embrace them
with great joy, saying : " Fear not, for
my sons are ye ; for if from my table
strangers are fed, how much more shall
ye be, that be my lawful sons ? Therefore
the King bade the woman aforesaid
send all the sons born of her unto his
Court to be brought up and nurtured."
So when these things had been shewn
in a vision unto the Blessed Francis as he
prayed, the holy man did understand that
himself was intended under the figure of
that poor woman.

51. And his prayer ended, he presented
himself again before the Pope, and related
unto him in order the parable which the
Lord had shewed unto him, and said :

"I, my lord, am that poor woman, whom God loved and of His mercy hath thus bedight, and by whom it hath seemed good unto Him to beget unto Himself lawful sons. And the King of Kings hath said unto me that all the sons that shall be born of me He will nourish, for that if He nourish strangers, of right ought He to nourish His lawful sons. For if the Lord giveth unto sinners worldly goods by reason of His love unto His sons that have need of nurture, much more shall He bestow in largesse unto men that live after the Gospel, unto whom it is owing as of desert." Upon hearing this, the lord Pope was amazed beyond measure, for that before the coming of the Blessed Francis he had seen in a vision the Church of S. John Lateran like to fall, and a certain Religious, small of stature, and lowly, holding it up by setting his own back thereunder. He awoke, astonished and adread, yet, for that he was a discreet man and a wise, bethought him what import this vision might have for him. But when after a few days the Blessed Francis did come unto him, and manifest unto him his purpose, using the words of the Holy Gospel, unto whose perfection he did

The
vision of
S. John
Lateran.

The aspire to the uttermost, and when the Rule lord Pope beheld him thus glowing with approved. the love of God, and was speaking with him of his vision, and of the said parable shewn unto the man of God, he began to say within himself: "Of a truth this is that Religious, the holy man by whom the Church of God shall be uplifted and upheld." For which cause he did embrace him and did approve the Rule that he had written. Moreover, he gave him authority to preach repentance in all places, and to his brethren also, yet in such wise as that they which should preach should obtain an authority from the Blessed Francis, and this same thing he did afterward ratify in the Consistory.

52. These privileges granted, the Blessed Francis gave God thanks, and on bended knees humbly and devoutly promised the lord Pope obedience and reverence. In like wise also, by injunction of the lord Pope, the other brethren did promise obedience and reverence unto the Blessed Francis. Then after receiving the Pope's blessing, and visiting the thresholds of the Apostles, the tonsure was given unto the Blessed Francis and the other eleven brethren according as the said Cardinal had provided, for he

was minded that they all twelve should <sup>The tree
that bent</sup> be clerics.

53. Departing from the City, the man of God set forth into the world with the said brethren, marvelling greatly that his desire had been thus easily accomplished, and growing daily in hope and in the faith of the Saviour, Who by His holy revelations had beforehand shewn unto him that which came to pass. For, before that he had gained the aforesaid privileges, one night in sleep it seemed unto him that he was walking along a road whereby was a right tall tree, fair to look on, brave and big. And when he drew nigh thereunto, and stood beneath it, marvelling at its height and comeliness, lo ! he himself became of a sudden so tall as that he did touch the top of the tree, and bent it down unto the earth right easily. And of a truth this did so befall ; Pope Innocent, the tallest and comeliest and bravest tree in the world, bending himself in such passing gracious wisc unto his petition and desire.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the efficacy of his preaching, and of the first place that he had, and how the brethren abode therein, and in what sort they departed thence.

S. 54. Thenceforward the Blessed Francis, going round among cities and castled villages, began everywhere to preach more fully and perfectly, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, not in the plausible words of human wisdom, but in the teaching and might of the Holy Spirit. For he was a true preacher, confirmed by Apostolic authority, making use of no flatteries, and abhorring the blandishments of speech, for that whatsoever he preached in words unto others, of that he had first convinced himself in deed, that he might in full confidence declare the truth. Men marvelled at the power of his discourses, and their truth, which man had not taught him; yea, even the lettered and the wise hastened most eagerly to see and hear him, as a man of another world. Thenceforward much

folk, nobles and commons, clerics and laymen, began under the influence of Divine inspiration to tread in the footsteps of the Blessed Francis, casting from them the cares of the world, and its vain shows, that they might live under his discipline.

55. Now as yet the happy Father and his sons were abiding in a place hard by Assisi that is called Rivo Torto, where was a certain wooden cote deserted of men, the which place was so narrow that scarce could they sit or lie down therein. There full often for lack of bread they ate naught but turnips, that they would beg here and there in their straits. The man of God wrote the names of the brethren on the beams of the cote, so that he that was minded to rest, or to pray, might know his own place, and that in their huddling together for the straitness of the room, no unseemly noise might disturb the silence of the mind. But on a day, while the brethren were abiding in this place, it chanced that a countryman came thither with his ass, desiring to take shelter with his ass in the cote, who, that he might not be repulsed by the brethren, spake unto his ass as he entered : “Get in with you, get well within, for we shall do well in this place.” Which

■ THE LEGEND OF

They acquire the hearing, and perceiving the words and pur-
quire the port of the countryman, the holy Father
Church was troubled in spirit, in especial over the
man, for that he had made a great dis-
turbance with his ass, disquieting the
brethren who were one and all giving
themselves up unto silence and prayer.
Wherefore the man of God said unto the
brethren : "I wot, brethren, that God
hath not called us apart to provide
stabling for an ass, nor an inn-parlour for
men, but that we should alway preach
unto men the way of salvation, giving
salutary counsels, and in especial that we
ought to devote ourselves unto prayer
and thanksgiving." They therefore left
the said wooden cote for the use of poor
lepers, betaking themselves unto the
Church of S. Mary of the Little Portion,
nigh whereunto they had sojourned for a
while in a little cell, before that they
obtained possession of the Church itself.

56. And after a time the Blessed
Francis, under the guidance of the will
and inspiration of God, did humbly
acquire that Church from the Abbot of
S. Benedict on Monte Subasio hard by
Assisi, which the holy man himself com-
mended with singular affection unto the
Minister-General and all the brethren,

as a place beyond all other places of this world beloved of the glorious Virgin. ^{Mary of} And toward assuring the commendation ^{the Little} ^{Portion.} and love of this place much was wrought by a vision that a brother yet living in the world saw, one that the Blessed Francis did love with an especial tenderness, manifesting toward him as long as he was with him his chiefest familiarity. This man, then, desiring to serve God, even as thereafter he did faithfully serve Him in the Religion, saw in a vision that all the men of this world were blind, and were gathered on bended knees in a circle around S. Mary of the Little Portion, and with clasped hands and faces uplifted toward heaven were beseeching the Lord with a voice loud and pitiful that of His mercy He would deign to enlighten them. To whom thus praying, it appeared that a great radiance brake forth from the sky, and falling upon them enlightened them all with salutary light. And that other, awaking, steadfastly purposed to serve God, and a little thereafter did leave this evil world and its vain shows far behind, and entered the Religion, wherein he abode in the service of God, humbly and devoutly.

CHAPTER XIV

*Of the Chapter that was held twice a year
in the place of S. Mary of the Little
Portion.*

The 57. Now after the aforesaid place of Whitsun S. Mary was acquired from the said Chapter. Abbot, the Blessed Francis did ordain that a Chapter should be held there twice a year, to wit, at Whitsuntide and at Michaelmas. At Whitsuntide, all the brethren assembled unto S. Mary and consulted how best they might observe the Rule; they did also allot brethren unto the various provinces, who should preach unto the people, and distribute the brethren throughout their provinces. Moreover S. Francis gave unto them admonitions, rebukes, and precepts, according as seemed good unto him by the counsel of the Lord. And all the words that he preached unto them he did shew forth in practice with tenderness and zeal. He paid reverence unto the prelates and priests of S. Mary, and did honour unto such as were elders, or of noble birth, or

rich, while the poor he loved inwardly, **S.** yearning toward them with the bowels **Francis** of compassion, and did demean himself **exhorta** as though he were subject unto all. **tions.**

And albeit he were raised above all the brethren, yet did he ordain one of the brethren that abode with him to be his Warden and lord, unto whom, that he might banish from himself all occasion for pride, he would humbly and devoutly pay obedience. For he did humble his head among all even unto the ground, that among the saints and the elect of God he might hereafter deserve to be exalted in the sight of God. He exhorted the brethren earnestly that they should strictly observe the Holy Gospel, and the Rule that they had vowed, and in especial that they should shew reverence and devotion as touching the divine offices, and the ordinances of the Church, and should devoutly hear Mass, and most devoutly adore the Body of the Lord. Priests, moreover, who do handle the reverend and highest Sacraments, he would should be in especial wise honoured by the brethren, insomuch as that wherever they might find them, they were to bow the head before them, and to kiss their hands; if they met them

Rever- on horseback, he would fain have them
ence to be kiss not only their hands, but even the
^{shewn} hooves of the horses whereon they rode,
unto all, by reason of the respect due unto their
office.

58. Moreover he exhorted the brethren that they should judge no man, nor think scorn of them that live delicately, and are clad proudly in superfluous bravery, for that our God is their Lord also, able to call them unto Himself, and having called, to justify them. He would say that he desired the brethren should reverence such as brothers, and their lords, for that they were brothers, being created by the one Creator, and lords, in as much as they did help the good to work repentance, ministering unto them the things needful for the body. This furthermore he would say : "The conversation of the brethren in the world ought to be after such a sort as that whoever doth see or hear them shall glorify our Heavenly Father, and shall devoutly praise Him." For his chief desire was that himself no less than the brethren should abound in works such as that the Lord should be praised thereby. And he would say unto them : "Even as ye with your mouth do proclaim peace,

in like manner take heed that ye have and it yet more fully in your hearts. Let ^{gentle-}
none through you be stirred up unto wrath, or unto offence, but let all men be stirred up through your gentleness unto peace, goodwill and mercy. For unto this have we been called, even that we may heal the wounded, bind up the broken-hearted, and recall them that have erred. For many seem unto us to be limbs of the devil, that shall yet be disciples of Christ."

59. Moreover, the loving Father did rebuke those of his brethren that were too austere unto themselves, labouring overmuch in vigils and fasts, and toils of the body. For certain of them did mortify themselves so severely in order that they might repress in themselves the lusts of the flesh, as that they did seem to hate their very selves. These the man of God forbade, exhorting them in kindly wise, and reproving them according unto reason, and binding up their wounds with the bands of salutary precepts. And among the brethren that attended the Chapter was none durst tell of worldly affairs, but they spake concerning the lives of the Saints, and how best and most perfectly they might win the grace

S. of the Lord Jesus Christ. If one of the Francis brethren that had come unto the Chapter dealeth wisely had suffered any temptation or tribulation, with by hearing the Blessed Francis discourse each. thus sweetly and fervently, and by beholding his penitence, they were delivered from their temptations, and were marvellously sustained in their trials. For in his compassion he spake unto them not as a judge, but as a merciful father unto his sons, and as a good physician unto the sick, knowing how to be weak with them that were weak, and to be afflicted with them that were afflicted. Yet none the less did he rebuke sinners after their deserts, and with due reprimand constrain the obstinate and rebellious. When the Chapter was at an end, he gave his blessing unto all the brethren, and sent them forth each unto the province allotted unto him. Whosoever among them had the spirit of God, and eloquence apt for preaching, whether he were cleric or layman, unto him he gave authority to preach. They, when they had received his blessing, with great rejoicing of spirit went through the world as pilgrims and strangers, carrying naught on their journey, save only the books wherein they might recite their

Hours. Wherever they met a priest, They were he rich or poor, good or bad, they bowed themselves humbly and did him reverence. And when they had need to lodge them, they did more gladly abide with priests than with worldly laymen.

60. But when it was not possible for them to find a lodging with priests, they would seek first for spiritually-minded and devout persons that feared God, with whom they might most conveniently sojourn, until in all the cities and castled villages that the brethren were fain to visit, the Lord should put it into the hearts of some that feared God to make ready ■ lodging for them, whilst that dwelling-places were being built for them in cities and castled villages. And the Lord gave them the word, and the spirit to speak, according as opportunity offered, words exceeding sharp as swords, piercing the hearts of young men and old, who, leaving father and mother and all their possessions, followed after the brethren, taking upon them the habit of their Religion. Verily then it was that the sword which cleaveth asunder was sent upon the earth, when the young came into the Religion, leaving their parents in

and converted very ~~con-~~ the slough of their sins. Yet were they whom the brethren received into the many. Order brought unto the Blessed Francis, that they might humbly and devoutly receive the habit of the Religion at his hands. Nor were men only thus converted unto the Order, but many maidens also, and widows, pricked to the heart at their preaching, did in accordance with their counsel betake them unto convents ordained in sundry cities and castled villages, that they might do penance, and for these one of the brethren was appointed Visitor and Confessor. In like manner also husbands with wives and wives with husbands, unable to free themselves from the bonds of matrimony, by the salutary counsel of the brethren did in their own homes bind themselves unto stricter penitence. And thus by means of the Blessed Francis, that perfect worshipper of the Holy Trinity, the Church of God is renewed in the three Orders, even as the foregoing restoration of the three Churches did typify. Of which Orders each in its own time was confirmed by the Pope.

CHAPTER XV

*Of the death of the lord John, their first
Protector, and how the lord Ugolino,
Bishop of Ostia, was taken as Father
and Protector of the Order.*

61. Now the venerable Father the ^{Death of} lord John of S. Paul, the Cardinal where-^{the lord} of we have made mention, he that oft-times afforded unto the Blessed Francis counsel and protection, was wont to commend the life and deeds of the holy man and of his brethren unto all the other Cardinals. Whose hearts were moved to cherish the man of God and his brethren, insomuch as that each one of them was fain to have in his own Curia some of those brethren, not by reason of any service they might render, but by reason of the holiness of the brethren, and of the devotion that glowed in themselves toward them. Therefore on the death of the lord John of S. Paul, the Lord put it into the heart of one of the Cardinals, by name Ugolino, at that time Bishop of Ostia, to love as of inward love

Their the Blessed Francis and his brethren, and new Pro-
tector, to protect and cherish them. He of a truth behaved himself toward them with a singular zeal of affection, as though he had been the father of them all, nay, more than the love of a father after the flesh extendeth naturally unto his sons after the flesh, did his love after this spiritual sort glow toward the man of God, that he might love and cherish him and his brethren in the Lord. Now the man of God, hearing of his glorious fame, for that glorious was his repute among the other Cardinals, came unto him with his brethren. And he, receiving them with joy, saith unto them : "I do offer myself unto you, ready to afford you help, counsel, and protection, according unto your good pleasure, and I am fain that ye should have me remembered in your prayers before the Lord." Then the Blessed Francis, giving God thanks, said unto that lord Cardinal : "Freely am I fain, my lord, to have you as the Father and Protector of our Religion, and fain am I too that all the brethren should have you ever remembered in their prayers." Afterward the Blessed Francis besought him that he would deign to be present at the Whitsuntide Chapter of the brethren,

and he forthwith gave gracious consent, He at-
and from thenceforward was present tendeth
every year at their Chapter. When he the
came unto the Chapter, all the brethren
assembled for the Chapter did go forth
in procession to meet him. But he, as
the brethren came up, dismounted from
his horse, and went on foot with them
unto the Church of S. Mary, and after-
ward did preach unto them, and celebrate
a Mass, wherein the man of God, Francis,
chanted the Gospel.

CHAPTER XVI

*Of the election of the first Ministers, and how
they were sent forth into the world.*

Brethren sent forth 62. Now when eleven years from the founding of the Religion were fulfilled, and the brethren had increased in numbers and in merit, Ministers were elected and sent forth with divers brethren throughout all the provinces, as it were, of the whole world, wherein the Catholic faith is held and observed. They were received in certain provinces, but were not permitted to build dwelling-places. From other provinces, howbeit, they were expelled, in the fear that they might prove to be infidels, for that, albeit the said lord Innocent III. had sanctioned their Order and Rule, yet had he not confirmed it by his letters, for which reason the brethren endured many trials from clerics and laymen. Wherefore the brethren were compelled to flee from divers provinces, and thus straitened and afflicted, sometimes even robbed and beaten by thieves, they returned with

great bitterness of spirit unto the Blessed ^{into} Francis. These things they suffered in ^{divers} provinces all parts beyond the mountains, such as in Germany, Hungary, and many other lands. And when this was brought unto the notice of the said lord Cardinal, he called unto him the Blessed Francis, and brought him unto the lord Pope Honorius,—the lord Innocent being dead,—and he caused another Rule that had been drawn up by the Blessed Francis to be solemnly confirmed with a seal hanging therefrom. In this Rule, the term betwixt Chapter and Chapter was lengthened, for the lessening the labour of the brethren that dwelt in distant parts.

63. Now the Blessed Francis purposed to ask from the said lord Pope Honorius that one of the Cardinals of the Roman Church might be as it were the Father of his Order, to wit, that same lord Bishop of Ostia, unto whom the brethren might resort for help with their affairs. The Blessed Francis had seen a vision, that had availed to lead him to ask the Cardinal, and to commend his Order unto the Roman Church. For he beheld as it were a little hen that was black and had feathred legs with feet like a tame

Parable dove, and she had so many chicks that
of the she was not able to gather them under
little hen. her own wings, but they went about in a
circle round the hen, beyond her wings.
Then, waking from sleep, he began to
think upon this vision, and forthwith
perceived by the Holy Spirit that he
himself was intended under the parable
of the hen. And he saith : “ I am that
hen, small of stature, and by nature
black, that ought to be simple as ■ dove,
and on winged affection of the virtues to
fly toward heaven. And unto me the
Lord of His mercy hath given and will
yet give many sons, whom I shall not be
able in mine own strength to protect.
Whence behoveth me to commend them
unto Holy Church, the which under the
shadow of her wings shall protect and
govern them.” .

64. Therefore when a few years had
passed after the said vision he came unto
Rome, and visited the lord Bishop of
Ostia, who bade the Blessed Francis go
with him on the following morning unto
the Curia, for that he was minded he
should preach before the lord Pope and
the Cardinals, and should devoutly and
lovingly commend his Religion unto them.
And albeit the Blessed Francis excused

himself in this, saying he was but a simple man and foolish, yet needs must he go with him unto the Curia. And when the Blessed Francis had entered the presence of the lord Pope and of the Cardinals, he was beheld by them with great gladness, and, rising up, he did preach unto them, as he had been inspired beforehand by the unction of the Holy Spirit alone. Then his preaching ended, he did commend his Rule unto the lord Pope and the whole body of Cardinals. And by his preaching the lord Pope and the lords Cardinal were every greatly edified, and their hearts were moved yet more tenderly to love the Religion.

S.
Francis
commend-
eth his
Religion

65. Thereafter the Blessed Francis said unto the Pope : " My lord, I have pity for you, by reason of the anxiety and perpetual toil wherewith you must needs keep watch on behalf of the Church of God, and sore ashamed am I that you should have such care and anxiety for us, Brothers Minor. For while many nobles, and rich, and very many Religious cannot enter into your presence, great awe and shamefastness ought there to be in us, that be poorer and more despised than the other Religious, not only in entering your presence, but even in standing

unto the before your threshold and daring to Pope, knock at the door of the Tabernacle of who Christendom. Wherefore I do humbly and devoutly beseech Your Holiness that you will deign to grant this lord Bishop of Ostia to be our Father, that in time of need the brethren may resort unto him, saving alway the dignity of your pre-eminence." And this request seemed good unto the lord Pope, and he granted unto the Blessed Francis the aforesaid lord Bishop of Ostia, appointing him as the most worshipful Protector of his Religion.

66. He, receiving the command of the lord Pope, like unto a good shepherd and protector stretched forth his hand to defend the brethren, writing unto many Prelates that had persecuted the brethren that they should oppose them no longer, but should rather give unto them counsel and help for preaching and for dwelling in their provinces, as unto good men and holy Religious approved by the authority of the Apostolic See. In like manner did many other Cardinals give them letters unto their own provinces with the same intent. Therefore at the Chapter next following, licence being given by the Blessed Francis unto the Ministers to

receive brethren into the Order, he sent formally them forth into the provinces aforesaid, appointing ^{eth} **Ugolino** bearing the letters of the Cardinals, together with the Rule, confirmed by the Apostolic Seal. All which things when the Prelates aforesaid saw, and recognised the credentials shewn by the brethren, they did freely grant them leave to build, to dwell, and to preach in those provinces. Wherefore while the brethren did thus abide and preach in those provinces, many folk seeing their humble and holy conversation, and hearing their words that were right sweet, stirring and kindling men's hearts unto the love of God, and the work of repentance, did come unto them, and take upon them the habit of holy Religion with fervency and humility.

67. And the Blessed Francis, seeing the trust and affection that the said lord Bishop of Ostia had for the brethren, did himself love him in like manner from the bottom of his heart. And for that by Divine revelation he knew what was to come, he did alway foretell in the letters that he wrote unto him that he should be Pope, calling him the Father of the whole world; for after this manner he would write unto him:

Protector “Unto the venerable Father in Christ thereof. of the whole world,”—and so forth. In sooth, after no long time, on the death of the lord Pope Honorius III., that very lord Bishop of Ostia was elected unto the Papacy, under the name of Pope Gregory IX., who unto the end of his life was conspicuous as a chief benefactor and protector both of the brethren and of other Religious, and in especial of the poor men of Christ; whence it is believed, not without reason, that he himself is joined unto the company of the Saints.

CHAPTER XVII

*Of the most holy dying of the Blessed Francis,
and how two years earlier he had re-
ceived in his body the Stigmata of the
Lord Jesus.*

68. Twenty years after the time where- S.
Francis
departeth
unto
Christ.
in he began most perfectly to cleave unto Christ, following the life and footsteps of the Apostles, that Apostolic man, Francis, in the year 1226 of Our Lord's Incarnation, on the 4th day of October, a Sunday, did depart in most happy wise unto Christ, after his many toils attaining rest, and worthily entering the presence of his Lord. Whose soul one of his disciples that was noted for his holiness did see like unto a star of the bigness of the moon, and beaming with the brightness of the sun, borne above many waters in a shining white cloudlet, ascending forthright into heaven by a straight path. For much had he laboured in the vineyard of the Lord, zealous and fervent in prayer, in fasting, in vigils, in preaching, and in journeying

His for the salvation of men, in care and pity
labours for his neighbour, and in denial of him-
self, even from the beginning of his
conversion until his passing over unto
Christ, Whom he had loved with his
whole heart, keeping remembrance of
Him evermore in his mind, praising
Him aloud with his mouth, and magnify-
ing Him in the exceeding fervour of his
works. For so fervently and in his very
heart did he love God that whensoever
he heard His Name, he was all melted
within, and burst forth into outward
utterance, saying: “Meet is it that
heaven and earth should bow down at
the Name of the Lord.”

69. And since he did bear in his heart
this fervour of love and continual
remembrance of Christ’s Passion, the
Lord Himself being minded to manifest
the same unto all the world, did adorn
him in marvellous wise while yet living
in the flesh with the special privilege of
a singular distinction. For whilst in
seraphic ardour of desire he was uplifted
toward God, and was transfigured by the
sweetness of partaking in His Passion
into the likeness of Him Who of His
exceeding love was willing to be cruci-
fied,—on a morning about the Feast of

the Exaltation of Holy Cross,* while he was praying on the side of the mountain that is called Alverna, about two years before his death, there appeared unto him a Seraph having six wings, and between the wings bearing the Form of a most beautiful Man crucified, Whose hands and feet were stretched out after the manner of a Cross, most evidently setting forth the Image of the Lord Jesus. And with twain wings he veiled his head, and with twain the rest of his body, and twain were spread forth to fly. When this vision disappeared, a wondrous flame of love abode in his heart, but on his flesh yet more wondrously appeared the mark of the Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the which the man of God in so far as he might concealed unto his death, not being minded to make public the sacred mystery of the Lord, nathless, he could not so entirely hide it but that it were known at least unto his most intimate companions.

70. But after his most blessed departure, all the brethren that were present, and very many Seculars, did behold his body most evidently adorned with the Stigmata of Christ. For they

On
Monte
Alverna.

The Stigmata beheld in his hands and his feet, not only the holes wrought by the nails, but also the very nails themselves, formed of his flesh, and of the same substance as the flesh, presenting moreover the blackness of iron ; while his right side was as though pierced by a lance, seamed with the ruddy scar of a most real and evident wound, whence, while he lived, the sacred blood did oftentimes flow. Of which Stigmata the irrefragable truth was not only in his lifetime and at his death by sight and touch most openly and clearly apparent, but furthermore after his death, when the truth had been manifested by many miracles in divers parts of the world, the lord Pope caused it to be yet more clearly vindicated. By which miracles the hearts of many that had not rightly conceived of the man of God, and had doubted concerning his Stigmata, were changed into such an assurance of faith as that they who had at first been his detractors, by the efficacy of God's goodness and the force of the truth itself, did become his praisers and most faithful preachers.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of the canonisation of the most blessed Father.

71. Now since in divers parts of the world he was already famous in this new light of miracles, and from all sides unto his sacred body did flock the folk that had experienced the greatest and most singular favours of the Lord through his merits, the aforesaid lord Pope Gregory, by the advice of the Cardinals and of many other Prelates, having read aloud and confirmed the miracles that the Lord had wrought through him, did enter him in the calendar of the Saints, decreeing that his Feast should be solemnly observed on the day of his death. Which things were done in the city of Assisi in the presence of many Prelates and of a great assembly of Princes, and Barons, and of countless persons from divers parts of the world, whom the lord Pope had made be convoked for that solemn occasion, in the year of Our Lord 1228, the second year of the pontificate of that Pope.

The 72. The lord Pope himself honoured Church the said Saint, whom in his life he had so built in his tenderly loved, not alone by thus canon-honour. ising him in such marvellous sort,* but furthermore by building in his honour ■ Church, in the foundation whereof the lord Pope himself did lay the first stone, and did enrich it with holy gifts and precious ornaments. Whereunto two years after his canonisation his most holy body was with honour translated from the place where at the first it had been buried. And unto this Church the Pope sent a golden Cross adorned with precious stones, wherein was enclosed wood from the Lord's own Cross, likewise ornaments and many vessels pertaining unto the service of the altar, with many costly vestments for use in solemn rites. Moreover he freed it from all lesser jurisdiction, and did appoint it by the authority of the Apostolic See to be the Head and Mother Church of the whole Order of Brothers Minor, as is set forth in the Privilege, published and sealed, whereunto the Cardinals did in a body subscribe.

73. Moreover of a truth, for that it were a light thing that the holy man of God should be honoured of senseless

* I.e., so immediately after his death.

things, were it not that through himself, Many follow in his steps dead in body, yet his spirit living in glory, the Lord might convert very many folk and might heal them,—after his death not only were many of the common people of either sex converted by his merits unto the Lord, but furthermore many great men and others of noble birth, together with their sons, took upon them the habit of his Order, secluding their wives and daughters in the Convents of the Poor Ladies. In like manner many learned men, and those most deeply versed in letters, both Seculars and beneficed clergy, spurning the lusts of the flesh, and its indifference to religion, and casting utterly aside all worldly desires, did enter the Order of the aforesaid Brothers Minor, in all things according unto the measure of the Divine grace conforming themselves unto the poverty of Christ, and unto His footsteps, and those of His servant the most Blessed Francis. Whence of him may not undeservedly be said that which is written of Samson, to wit, that he slew many more in his death than he had slain before in his life, yet in such sort as that the death they underwent at his hands was but the beginning of the life of glory that liveth for ever. Unto

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The life which glory, through the merits of
of glory. our most holy Father Francis, may He
bring us at the last, Who liveth and
reigneth from everlasting unto everlast-
ing. Amen.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the granting of the Indulgence of S. Mary of the Little Portion.

74. When the Blessed Francis was ^{S.} tarrying at S. Mary of the Little Portion, it was revealed unto him on a certain night by the Lord that he should go unto the lord Pope Honorius, who then was at Perugia, to beseech an Indulgence for the said Church of S. Mary of the Little Portion, specially set apart by himself. He accordingly, rising at early morn, called for Brother Masseo of Marignano as his companion, and going to the said lord Pope Honorius, spake unto him : “ My lord and Holy Father, of late I have repaired a Church unto the honour of the glorious Virgin ; I beseech Your Holiness to bestow thereupon an Indulgence to be granted without any oblations.” And he answered and said : “ This may not conveniently be done, for he that seeketh an Indulgence ought of right to stretch forth a helping hand to deserve it. But shew me for how many years thou dost desire

Francis
beseech-
eth an
Indulg-
ence

for S. it, and how great an Indulgence I shall
Mary of besw thereupon." To whom made
the Little answer S. Francis: "Holy Father, may
Portion. it please Your Holiness to give not years,
but souls." And the lord Pope said.
"How meanest thou by souls?" Saith
the Blessed Francis: "Holy Father, I
would fain, so it please Your Holiness,
that all they who shal come unto that
Church contrite and confessed, and duly
absolved by the priest, shall be absolved
from punishment and blame in heaven and
in earth, from the day of their baptisms
unto the day and hour of their entrance
into the Church aforesaid." And the
lord Pope made answer: "A great and
grave thing is this that thou seekest,
Francis, but never hath the Roman Curia
been wont to grant any such Indulgence."
And the Blessed Francis said: "My lord,
that which I seek, I seek not on mine
own behalf, but on behalf of Him that
sent me, to wit, Our Lord Jesus Christ."
Then the lord Pope did straightway con-
fer the same, saying thrice: "It is our
pleasure that thou shouldst have it."
Then the lords Cardinal that were present
replied: "Take heed, lord, seeing that if
you grant this man such an Indulgence,
you do annul that granted unto them that

pass beyond seas."* The lord Pope made ^{The Pope} answer : "We have given and granted it ^{granteth} unto him, nor can we nor ought we to annul what we have done. But let us restrict it so that it shall last for one natural day only." Then calling Brother Francis he said unto him : "Behold, from henceforth we grant that any who shall come and enter the said Church, truly contrite and confessed, shall be absolved from punishment and blame. And we will that this shall be valid each year for ever, yet for one day only, to wit, from the first vespers, through the night, to vespers of the day following." Then the Blessed Francis, bowing his head, was going forth from the palace. And the lord Pope, seeing him go out, called unto him, saying : "O simpleton, after what sort art thou departing ? What proof dost thou carry away with thee as concerning this Indulgence ?" And the Blessed Francis made answer : "Sufficeth me your word alone. If the work be of God, it is for Himself to manifest His own work. Concerning this I desire no other document, but let the Blessed Virgin Mary alone be my charter. Amen."

* I.e., the special Indulgence to the Crusaders.

EPILOGUE

THE three principal authorities on the life of S. Francis of Assisi, which have supplied his many subsequent biographers with most of their material, are the *Mirror of Perfection*, the *Little Flowers*, and the *Legend of the Three Companions*. The two first of these have been published in English of late years,* but the third, well-known as it is at second-hand through the extracts and quotations given by Mrs. Oliphant and others, has hitherto been inaccessible to English readers. The present translation was undertaken, finished, and accepted by the publisher, before either he or the translator were aware that any other translation was contemplated. Its aim is to complete the Franciscan trilogy in the

* *The Mirror of Perfection.* (MS. recently discovered and edited by M. Paul Sabatier.) Translated by Dr. Sebastian Evans. Published by D. Nutt, 1901.

The Little Flowers of S. Francis of Assisi. Translated by T. W. Arnold. Published by Dent. Temple Classics Series.

mother-tongue by a literal and, it is hoped, accurate translation of the Latin text as it stands in the latest edition of the *Legend*, published as a separate work, *Sancti Francisci Legendam Trium Sociorum ex cod. Fulg.*; edidit Michael Faloci-Pulignani. (Foligno, 1898.) Should M. Sabatier's researches happily bring to light a complete copy of the missing original, or any hitherto unpublished fragments, the necessary corrections or additions resulting from the discovery will be made in any future edition of the translation.

The Foligno codex dates from 14—, exact year unknown. The numbering of the chapters, and their headings, are taken from it, the paragraphs added from the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, in which the *Legend* was first printed. Two departures only have been made from the text, i.e. (par. 42), reading “*sollicite*” (with other versions) for “*non*,” and expanding the penultimate sentence of chapter xviii., where some words have apparently dropped out. There are in all seventeen known codices of the *Legend*; the first, believed to have been complete, was originally in the Convent of Assisi, but is now lost.

Several French versions have been made, the most recent being that of Mme. Arvède Barine (Paris, 1901), and there is an interesting parallel Latin and Italian text.*

English readers who care for the *Little Flowers* and the *Mirror* may perhaps be glad of an opportunity of comparing them with the *Legend* without having to consult the original. But the *Legend* itself is something more than a contribution to the biography of the Saint. Whatever may be its claims in this respect, the work has an enduring value of its own as a faithful if inadequate record of the influence exerted by a personality, unique in its combined saintliness and charm, over the minds of the three brethren most intimately acquainted with his real character and motives.

The first place among biographies must assuredly be given to the *Mirror of Perfection*, written in 1227, the year after S. Francis's death, by one of our Three Companions, Brother Leo, his most intimate friend. We have here a vivid

* *La Leggenda di San Francesco, scritta da tre suoi Compagni.* Published at Rome, 1899, by the Padri Marcellino da Civezza e Teofilo Domenichelli, dei Minori.

and fascinating portrait drawn from the life,—“We that were with him,” he says again and again, “beheld this.” It is as the testimony of S. John to a greater Master,—“he that saw it bare record, and his record is true.”

Next in point of time comes the first *Life*, by Thomas of Celano (author of *Dies Irae*, *Dies Illa*), written in 1228-29. This was compiled by the express order of Pope Gregory IX., and has somewhat of an official nature, being written to suit the party who tried to explain away the absolute strictness of the Rule in favour of a modified observance. In spite of the eloquence of a style to which Brother Leo never aspires, the impression left is vague and conventional, the friend writing of the human traits of the master he had intimately loved has given place to the hagiographer writing “for edification.” Thomas of Celano acquired his knowledge only at second-hand, and, where he differs from our Three Companions, we prefer to trust them. For instance, in speaking of Francis as a youth, he is anxious to magnify his conversion by blackening his previous life, and so tells us of “the sins that were as the over-seething of youthful heat,” in direct con-

tradiction to the statement of the *Legend* (I. 3), of his refusal to take part in evil speaking or doing, and to what we should conclude from his character in later life.

Our *Legend* was written, as its authors tell us in their Introduction, in the year 1246, and, as they also tell us, at the bidding of one Crescentius, then Minister-General of the Order. The same bidding called forth, about a year later, a second *Life* from Thomas of Celano, in which he borrowed largely from the *Mirror of Perfection* and the *Three Companions*, re-touching the style. It seems probable, as M. Sabatier points out, that the *Legend* has come down to us in a fragmentary condition, and that portions may have been suppressed as inconveniently uncompromising for the party of the modified observance.* He supports this view by the following arguments :—

i. In a *Legend* composed by Leo, Rufino, and Angelo, we naturally expect to find in minute detail the events in the life of Francis which these brethren witnessed. Now, the *Legend of the Three Companions* stops abruptly at the very

* *Vie de S. François*, pp. lxii.-lxvii. *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. xx.

moment at which these brethren became most intimately connected with his life.

2. This is all the more surprising because Thomas of Celano in his first *Life* passes quickly over the last years of Francis ; the Three Companions in their desire to supplement this *Life* would have laid special stress on this period.

3. The letter to the Minister-General, which the authors place at the beginning of their *Legend*, gives a summary, not of what they intend to narrate, but of what they have narrated, which does not at all correspond to the *Legend* we have to-day.

4. The authors tell us they have not adhered to chronological order, whereas in the *Legend* as it stands they do adhere to it strictly.

5. Chapters xvii. and xviii. are not of the same style as the rest, but merely a *résumé* from Celano's first *Life*.

M. Sabatier concludes : * “ The Three Companions began by telling the story of his (Francis's) youth, his life in the world, his conversion, his apostolate, and there is no doubt but that these narratives were followed by many others in which they

* *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. cxv.

EPILOGUE

. . . shewed him as the founder of the new life, the head of the Order in the carrying out of its work ; but this section,—comprising the last years of the life of Francis, the years of greatest fruitfulness and of greatest anxiety,—has not come down to us."

We certainly notice omissions in the *Legend*; for instance, we should have expected more local colour,—that men writing from Greccio would have alluded to scenes that happened there, such as the Institution of the Christmas "Presepio" by Francis,—and we miss all the stories of his magnetic influence over the animal world, so dear to us in the *Little Flowers* and the *Mirror*; but, apart from any suppressions, we must remember the Three distinctly tell us theirs is no continuous history, but a selection of incidents that particularly attract them, and that have not been specially noticed before. This is insisted on by those who, like M. Faloci-Pulignani, believe we have the *Legend* in its entirety, and they cite as sufficient answer to the promise to relate miracles the several visions, instances of prophetic power, description of the scene on La Vernia, and miracles resulting therefrom. Be this as it may, all readers

will surely endorse M. Sabatier's appreciation (saving only the claims of the subsequently-discovered *Mirror*) ; "Dans son état actuel, cette Légende des Trois Compagnons est le plus beau monument franciscain et l'une des productions les plus délicieuses du moyen âge. Il y a dans ces pages je ne sais quoi de doux, d'intime, de chaste, une sève de jeunesse et de virilité que les Fioretti rappelleront sans y atteindre jamais. A plus de six cents ans de distance, nous y sentons revivre le rêve le plus pur qui ait fait tressaillir l'Eglise chrétienne."*

The biography of Bonaventura, in 1263, was no less distinctly an official production, the view of the man is completely lost in that of the Saint and thaumaturge. The well-known and loved *Fioretti* give him back to us as he lived, and still lives, in the hearts of the Italian people ; the stories were handed down from mouth to mouth, and probably collected in writing in the early part of the fourteenth century.

The late *Speculum Vitae* only deserves mention, while others are omitted, because it is so often confused with the original *Mirror* (*Speculum Perfectionis*).

* *Vie de S. François*, p. lxvi.

It is merely a bundle of legends carelessly compiled from manuscripts in the Franciscan Monastery at Avignon, and its first edition was published in 1504. The greater part of the *Mirror of Perfection*, among others, was embedded in this, chronology was ignored, and a desire for "edification" prevailed.

Lovers of S. Francis need no reminder of Dante's exquisite XIth Canto of the *Paradiso*, but it has a special interest for readers of the *Legend of the Three Companions*, as it really seems as though Dante must have had the *Legend* in his mind when writing. The very expression the Three Companions use of Brother Bernard (x. 40) "he that first . . . ran to follow the holy man of God" ("qui primo pacis . . . legationem amplectens post sanctum Dei cucurrit") is reproduced in Dante—

"So that the sainted Bernard first began
Barefoot to run in quest of peace so sweet,
Yet seemed to advance too slowly though
he ran," *

—while the devotion of Francis to the

* " . . . il venerabile Bernardo
Si scalzò prima, e retro a tanta pace
Corse, ■ correndo gli parv' esser tardo."
(Par. XI. 79 sqq. I. Wright's Translation.)

Lady Poverty, and his interview with the Pope, are dwelt on in the same spirit in both accounts.

Who were these Three Companions? They all live before us in the *Mirror* and the *Little Flowers*; indeed, the latter is nearly as eloquent concerning Leo, the beloved "Brother little lamb of God" * (*frate pecorello di Dio*), as concerning his master. He it was to whom Francis shewed "what things were perfect joy," he that received, in a time of temptation, his written Benediction, and that watched with observant love all the simple details of his daily life, and noted his words. "With great purity," says the *Little Flowers*, "and with good intention began he to keep watch upon and to observe the life of S. Francis: and for his purity's sake he merited to see S. Francis full many and many a time rapt in God and uplifted from the earth. . . . And what did this simple brother do, when S. Francis was uplifted from the earth but a little way, so that he could reach him? He went softly

* This tender "diminutive of affection," is untranslatable into ordinary English. The Middle-English "cade-lamb" has been suggested to me as an equivalent—"the Brother that was God's own cade-lamb" (Dr. Evans).

to him, and embraced his feet, and kissed them, and spake with tears: "My God, have mercy on me a sinner, and through the merits of this holy man grant me to find Thy grace." Him Francis chose out, "as above the rest the most simple and most pure," to share the knowledge of the "holy secret of the Lord,"—the Stigmata,—and in his last hours it was Leo, together with Angelo, that comforted him by singing his "Song of Brother Sun and of the other creatures of the Lord," with its valiant and touching welcome to "Sister Death, the death of the body." Leo died probably in 1271, but not before he had exercised a marked influence on the later Observants. He was a close friend of S. Clare's, who undertook the charge of his manuscripts. We owe him a great debt, for Leo, as M. Sabatier points out, "preserved from oblivion the historic personality of his spiritual father, and printed on the heart of the Italian people a portrait of Francis such as nothing has been able to efface." *

The several characters of the three Brethren have been drawn for us by Francis himself, when he praises † "the

* *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. lxxi.

† *Mirror of Perfection*, p. lxxxv. Dr. Evans' Translation.

simplicity and purity of Brother Leo, that in truth was of a most holy purity ; the courtesy of Brother Angelo, that was the first soldier to come into the Order, and was fulfilled of all courtesy and kindness ; . . . the godly and continual activity of the holy Rufinus, that did always pray without intermission, so as that even asleep or at work his mind was always with the Lord." The *Little Flowers* tells us that Angelo "was a man of very gentle birth, and in the world had been a knight," and that Rufino was "one of the most noble gentles of Assisi," and "a man of great sanctity." He and Angelo, together with Masseo (mentioned in the Introduction to our *Legend*), were the three who accompanied Francis to La Vernia. Rufino was of the same noble family as S. Clare,—the Scifi ; he seems to have been of a contemplative nature, perhaps inclining to melancholy, for we are told (*Little Flowers*, xxix.) how he "was on a time grievously assailed and tempted in his soul in respect of predestination, whereby he became altogether melancholy and sad." When, by the help of S. Francis, he had repulsed the devil, he was left in "such gladness and sweetness of spirit and uplifting of the

mind that day and night he was absorbed and rapt in God. . . . He would have continued day and night in prayer and in contemplation of the things of God, if the others had suffered him." The chapter following goes on to tell how S. Francis roused him from this contemplation to preach, sorely against his will, in Assisi.

Other Brothers mentioned in the *Legend*—Bernard, Giles, Silvester, and the rest—are also charmingly portrayed in the *Little Flowers*. John de Cappella (*Legend*, ix. 35) alone has an unenviable notoriety, as being the Judas of the band, who finally hanged himself. (*Little Flowers*, i.)

The keynote of our *Legend* seems the oft-recurring simple statement of the effect the changed life of Francis had on all around. "They marvelled, for they knew that he had lived delicately in the world." The contrast is indeed startling, and the life lived before their eyes must have been more startling still, in that age of violence, self-seeking, and worldliness in Church and State. The chivalrous gaiety that made naught of toil and privations combined with his absolute genuineness and simplicity to make a truly

inating character, and deep below these traits lay the wonderful self-contest, as shewn in his dealings with the spires (*Legend*, iv.), an intense conflict of the world's burden of sin, and of his own, the tender-heartedness that moved him, when a brother related "how the blessed Virgin at the hour of meal-time was so poor that she had naught to give her Son to eat," to "sigh with heavy grief, and, leaving the table, to eat his bread on the bare ground" (*Legend*, v. 5),—that *compassiva dulcedo*, as our authors call it elsewhere, that enabled him to enter into the sympathies of the creatures of the Lord," to shew such infalling tact in his dealings with other men, and, above all, to "bear in his heart the terror of love, and continual remembrance of Christ's Passion" (*Legend*, xvii. 19).

Small marvel that men were drawn irresistibly to him, that the rich Bernard, well-born Rufino and Clare, clerks Peter da Catana and Sylvester, joined with the humble Giles, and the hosts of burgesses and peasants that followed him, —small marvel that Umbrian cities and villages rang their bells as he approached, and treasured every remembrance of his

passing ! Was not "Brother beloved at Gubbio because "the folk . . . marking him pass so through the city minded them of the virtue and sanctity of S. F who had tamed him ? (*Little* xxi.)

This beautiful and lovable nature reflected in the lives of those he gathered round him, as we see in the descriptions of the first brethren (*Legend*, a description hardly to be equalled outside the early chapters of the Ac. Apostles. And it is peculiarly interesting to see how the spirit of Francis, a found adherence to his ideals, found among brethren in such entirely different surroundings, and so far removed from the personal influence, as were the province of England. How fully, in spite of severe climate and hindrances, the early Franciscans carried their master's life and teaching country is seen in the pages of de Eccleston's *De Adventu Aucti in Angliam* (1224). We feel that not very far from Rivo Torto - "wooden cote" of our *Legend*, we read of their poor little ch. Cambridge, constructed by one ca-

day.* It is also interesting to readers to learn of Henry III.'s contribution to the building of the church of S. Francis at Assisi (cf. xviii. 72). †

of the narratives of our *Legend* we find substantially the same account of the *Mirror*, the *Little Flowers*, the first *Life* by Thomas of Celano, his imprisonment at Perugia, the first vision, the scene with the leper, the interview before the Bishop, the vision of Bernard, the threefold vision of the Gospels on which the legend was based, the special devotion of the Church of S. Mary of the Little Flower, and the account of the Stigmata, with instances of this. The whole legend finds its best illustration in the incomparable frescoes in the Upper and Lower Churches at Assisi.

The relations of Francis and Pope Henry III. are of the deepest interest, bringing together two of the most remarkable and influential personages of the Middle Ages. The great Pope,

aedificabant fratres capellam ita pauperrimam ut serpentarius in una die faceret."

"cessit ministro generali de ordine Fratrum minorum XXX. marcas ad fabricam ecclesiae Sti. Francisci Assisii."

whether from a statesman-like perception of the valuable aid the popularity and rapidly-increasing numbers of the Franciscans would prove to the Church, or from sincere sympathy with Francis's aims, gave him prompt and distinct encouragement. Indeed, he would have found it hard to withstand the simple Umbrian preacher, so gentle, humble, and reverent, and yet so inflexible in his purpose to "live after the manner of the Holy Gospel." This encouragement was continued by his successor, Honorius III. — the simple-minded old man who, we are told by a contemporary, had given his goods to the poor and spent his days in peace,—and later by Ugolino, a near kinsman of Innocent's, first as Cardinal, then as Pope Gregory IX. He, as M. Sabatier points out, changed the originally lay character of Francis's institution into ecclesiastical, and used the Third Order for political ends, e.g., against the Feudal System and the Emperor. Francis no doubt truly loved and looked up to the Cardinal as a private friend, but in the matter of asking for his formal Protectorate we cannot help suspecting that his hand was somehow at

forced, and that the authorities felt Signolino's direction would be a safeguard to a movement so democratic,—albeit, while preaching liberty to the poor, its founder inculcated reverence towards prelates and nobles (*Legend*, xiv. 57-59.)

It is well to lay stress on the fact, though the *Legend* makes but brief allusion to it (xi. 41), that Francis was determined his brethren should work with their hands as well as pray. We know but too well how grievously they fell away from this wholesome rule, but his own purpose is clear enough, both from his treatment of the "Brother that did neither pray nor work, but did eat well" (*Mirror*, xxiv.), and the statement in his will: "Ego manibus meis laborabam . . . , et omnes alii fratres firmiter volo quod laborent."*

The *Legend*, like the *Mirror*, brings out one curious feature—the love of Francis for speaking the French tongue, "albeit he spake it not aright." (*Legend*, iii. 9, and *passim*.) It was the language of the cloth-merchants of Troyes, with whom he had to deal in business, but it was also that of the chivalry and romance in which he delighted, calling

* "Testamentum" in *Speculum Perfectionis*, p. 311.

his brethren "my knights of the Table Round," and the "jongleurs du bon Dieu".

As to the style of the Three Companies, it must be confessed that between them they do not much improve on Brother Leo's unaided efforts in what Dr. Evans has described as "dead, provincial, mediaeval Latin." They are bald and prosy, content to use the same words and expressions over and over again, and connect their sentences very loosely. One sighs sometimes for the vivid and charming Tuscan of the *Little Flower*. Chaps. xvii. and xviii., as already pointed out, differ from the rest, and show an attempt at literary conceits and antithesis. The Chapter "Of the granting of the Indulgence of S. Mary of the Little Portion" has a special interest attaching to it. For some time critics hesitated to believe in the granting of an unusual and unconditional Indulgence but now the testimony of the Franciscan legends is supported by the recently discovered letter of Jacques de Vitry and M. Sabatier has given in his complete adherence to the tradition of his fathers.

* *Revue Chrétienne*
Chapitre de la Vie de

in his *Bartholi's Tractatus de Indulgentia Portiuncula* (1900) he cites the earliest explicit testimony to the subject (p. xxvii.). Jacques de Vitry (d. 1244) was in Perugia at the time of Innocent's death there (1216), and of the visit paid by Francis to Bonaventura; his letter on the subject is given by M. Sabatier in the *Speculum** (1896, sqq.). As Bishop of Acre, he was present at the siege and taking of Damietta in 1219, and gives us a graphic description of Francis's arrival in the crusading camp there, and of the affection with which he was held by all.

As regards the eagerness of Francis for an indulgence, with which some may find it difficult to sympathise, it must be remembered that the mercenary and unreligious traffic that aroused Luther's indignation was unknown in the early thirteenth century, when an Indulgence was devoutly believed to be the outward token of God's forgiveness, and a confirmation of weak faith, like the official testation of his cure that Christ Himself allowed the leper to receive from the priest. Francis insisted on true contri-

* First published in the *Nouveaux Mémoires de l'Académie de Bruxelles*.

tion and confession as a condition of those seeking the Indulgence of Portiuncula, which he thus hoped would become the means of winning many souls.

It is with the sincerest gratitude that I record my thanks to Dr. Sebastian Evans, who, amid all his own literary work, has most kindly made time to revise my translation, and to relate with many invaluable suggestions.

E. G. S.

THE END

